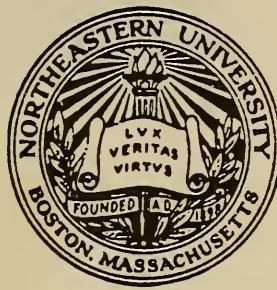


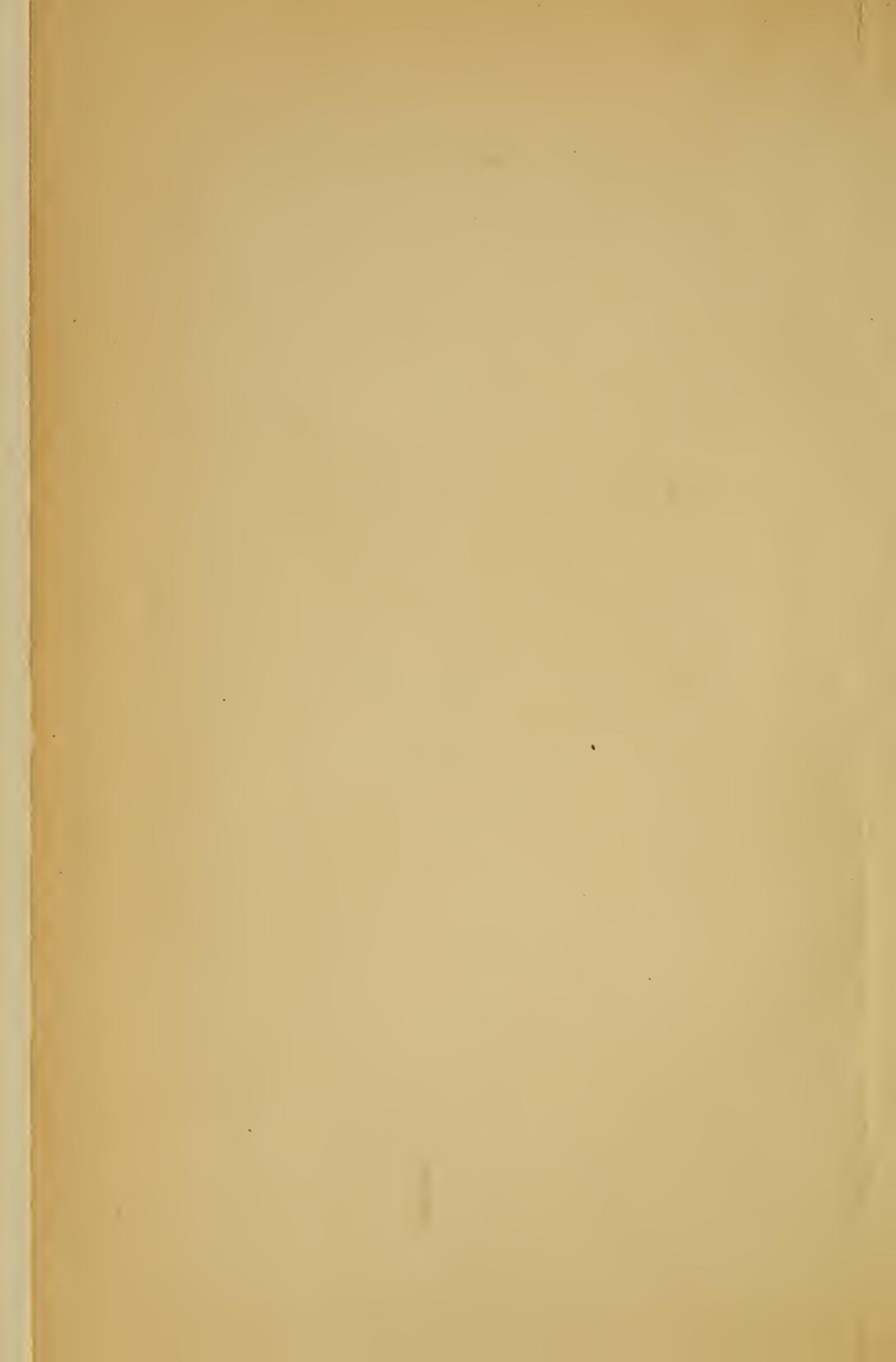
PLAYS OF
EURIPIDES



Northeastern University
Library

P. B. YERNOV
NOVOSIBIRSK STATE UNIVERSITY
SIBERIA, R. S. F.

354 ECL



THE PLAYS OF
EURIPIDES

I

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME

VOLUME II

MEDEA

IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS

ELECTRA

THE PLAYS OF EURIPIDES

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH RHYMING VERSE

WITH EXPLANATORY NOTES BY

GILBERT MURRAY
LL.D., D.LITT., F.B.A.

REGIUS PROFESSOR OF GREEK IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD
FORMERLY PROFESSOR OF GREEK IN THE UNIVERSITY OF GLASGOW

VOLUME I

HIPPOLYTUS

TROJAN WOMEN

BACCHAE

LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN & SONS
44 & 45 RATHBONE PLACE

1911

[All rights reserved]

PA
3975
ARX
1911
V. 1

Printed by BALLANTYNE, HANSON & Co
At the Ballantyne Press, Edinburgh

HIPPOLYTUS

A

37418

CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

THE GODDESS APHRODITÊ.

THE GODDESS ARTEMIS.

THESEUS, *King of Athens and Trozén.*

PHAEDRA, *daughter of Minos, King of Crete, wife to Theseus.*

HIPPOLYTUS, *bastard son of Theseus and the Amazon Hippolytê.*

THE NURSE OF PHAEDRA.

AN OLD HUNTSMAN.

A HENCHMAN OF HIPPOLYTUS.

A CHORUS OF HUNTSMEN.

A CHORUS OF TROZENIAN WOMEN, WITH THEIR LEADER.

ATTENDANTS ON THE THREE ROYAL PERSONS.

“The scene is laid in Trozén. The play was first acted when Epameinon was Archon, Olympiad 87, year 4 (B.C. 429). Euripides was first, Iophon second, Ion third.”

HIPPOLYTUS

The scene represents the front of the royal castle of Trozēn, the chief door being in the centre, facing the audience. Two statues are visible, that of ARTEMIS on the right, that of APHRODITE or CYPRIS on the left. The goddess APHRODITE is discovered alone.

APHRODITE.

Great among men, and not unnamed am I,
The Cyprian, in God's inmost halls on high.
And wheresoe'er from Pontus to the far
Red West men dwell, and see the glad day-star,
And worship Me, the pious heart I bless,
And wreck that life that lives in stubbornness.
For that there is, even in a great God's mind,
That hungereth for the praise of human kind.

So runs my word ; and soon the very deed
Shall follow. For this Prince of Theseus' seed,
Hippolytus, child of that dead Amazon,
And reared by saintly Pittheus in his own
Strait ways, hath dared, alone of all Trozēn,
To hold me least of spirits and most mean,
And spurns my spell and seeks no woman's kiss.
But great Apollo's sister, Artemis,

EURIPIDES

He holds of all most high, gives love and praise,
And through the wild dark woods for ever strays,
He and the Maid together, with swift hounds
To slay all angry beasts from out these bounds,
To more than mortal friendship consecrate !

I grudge it not. No grudge know I, nor hate ;
Yet, seeing he hath offended, I this day
Shall smite Hippolytus. Long since my way
Was opened, nor needs now much labour more.

For once from Pittheus' castle to the shore
Of Athens came Hippolytus over-seas
Seeking the vision of the Mysteries.

And Phaedra there, his father's Queen high-born,
Saw him, and, as she saw, her heart was torn
With great love, by the working of my will.
And for his sake, long since, on Pallas' hill,
Deep in the rock, that Love no more might roam,
She built a shrine, and named it *Love-at-home* :
And the rock held it, but its face alway
Seeks Trozēn o'er the seas. Then came the day
When Theseus, for the blood of kinsmen shed,
Spake doom of exile on himself, and fled,
Phaedra beside him, even to this Trozēn.
And here that grievous and amazed Queen,
Wounded and wondering, with ne'er a word,
Wastes slowly ; and her secret none hath heard
Nor dreamed.

But never thus this love shall end !
To Theseus' ear some whisper will I send,
And all be bare ! And that proud Prince, my foe,
His sire shall slay with curses. Even so
Endeth that boon the great Lord of the Main
To Theseus gave, the Three Prayers not in vain.

And she, not in dishonour, yet shall die.
I would not rate this woman's pain so high
As not to pay mine haters in full fee
That vengeance that shall make all well with
me.

But soft, here comes he, striding from the
chase,
Our Prince Hippolytus!—I will go my ways.—
And hunters at his heels: and a loud throng
Glorying Artemis with praise and song!
Little he knows that Hell's gates opened are,
And this his last look on the great Day-star!

[APHRONITE withdraws, unseen by HIPPOLYTUS
and a band of huntsmen, who enter from
the left, singing. They pass the Statue of
APHRONITE without notice.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Follow, O follow me,
Singing on your ways
Her in whose hand are we,
Her whose own flock we be,
The Zeus-Child, the Heavenly;
To Artemis be praise!

HUNTSMEN.

Hail to thee, Maiden blest,
Proudest and holiest:
God's Daughter, great in bliss,
Leto-born, Artemis!
Hail to thee, Maiden, far
Fairest of all that are,

Yea, and most high thine home,
 Child of the Father's hall ;
 Hear, O most virginal,
 Hear, O most fair of all,
 In high God's golden dome.

[*The huntsmen have gathered about the altar of ARTEMIS. HIPPOLYTUS now advances from them, and approaches the Statue with a wreath in his hand.*

HIPPOLYTUS.

To thee this wreathèd garland, from a green
 And virgin meadow bear I, O my Queen,
 Where never shepherd leads his grazing ewes
 Nor scythe has touched. Only the river dews
 Gleam, and the spring bee sings, and in the glade
 Hath Solitude her mystic garden made.

No evil hand may cull it : only he
 Whose heart hath known the heart of Purity,
 Unlearned of man, and true whate'er befall.
 Take therefore from pure hands this coronal,
 O mistress loved, thy golden hair to twine.
 For, sole of living men, this grace is mine,
 To dwell with thee, and speak, and hear replies
 Of voice divine, though none may see thine eyes.

Oh, keep me to the end in this same road !

[*An OLD HUNTSMAN, who has stood apart from the rest, here comes up to HIPPOLYTUS.*

HUNTSMAN.

My Prince—for ‘Master’ name I none but God—
 Gave I good counsel, wouldst thou welcome it ?

HIPPOLYTUS.

Right gladly, friend ; else were I poor of wit.

HUNTSMAN.

Knowest thou one law, that through the world has
won ?

HIPPOLYTUS.

What wouldst thou ? And how runs thy law ?
Say on.

HUNTSMAN.

It hates that Pride that speaks not all men fair !

HIPPOLYTUS.

And rightly. Pride breeds hatred everywhere.

HUNTSMAN.

And good words love, and grace in all men's sight ?

HIPPOLYTUS.

Aye, and much gain withal, for trouble slight.

HUNTSMAN.

How deem'st thou of the Gods? Are they the same ?

HIPPOLYTUS.

Surely : we are but fashioned on their frame.

HUNTSMAN.

Why then wilt thou be proud, and worship not . . .

HIPPOLYTUS.

Whom ? If the name be speakable, speak out !

HUNTSMAN.

She stands here at thy gate : the Cyprian Queen !

HIPPOLYTUS.

I greet her from afar : my life is clean.

HUNTSMAN.

Clean? Nay, proud, proud ; a mark for all to scan !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Each mind hath its own bent, for God or man.

HUNTSMAN.

God grant thee happiness . . . and wiser thought !

HIPPOLYTUS.

These Spirits that reign in darkness like me not.

HUNTSMAN.

What the Gods ask, O Son, that man must pay !

HIPPOLYTUS (*turning from him to the others*).

On, huntsmen, to the Castle ! Make your way
Straight to the feast room ; 'tis a merry thing
After the chase, a board of banqueting.
And see the steeds be groomed, and in array
The chariot dight. I drive them forth to-day.

[*He pauses, and makes a slight gesture of reverence to the Statue on the left. Then to the OLD HUNTSMAN.*

That for thy Cyprian, friend, and nought beside !

[*HIPPOLYTUS follows the huntsmen, who stream off by the central door into the Castle. The OLD HUNTSMAN remains.*

HUNTSMAN (*approaching the Statue and kneeling*).

O Cyprian—for a young man in his pride
I will not follow!—here before thee, meek,
In that one language that a slave may speak,
I pray thee; Oh, if some wild heart in froth
Of youth surges against thee, be not wroth
For ever! Nay, be far and hear not then:
Gods should be gentler and more wise than men!

[*He rises and follows the others into the Castle.*

The Orchestra is empty for a moment, then there enter from right and left several Trozenian women, young and old. Their number eventually amounts to fifteen.

CHORUS.

There riseth a rock-born river,
Of Ocean's tribe, men say;
The crags of it gleam and quiver,
And pitchers dip in the spray:
A woman was there with raiment white
To bathe and spread in the warm sunlight,
And she told a tale to me there by the river,
The tale of the Queen and her evil day:

How, ailing beyond allayment,
Within she hath bowed her head,
And with shadow of silken raiment
The bright brown hair bespread.
For three long days she hath lain forlorn,
Her lips untainted of flesh or corn,
For that secret sorrow beyond allayment
That steers to the far sad shore of the dead.

Some Women.

Is this some Spirit, O child of man ?
 Doth Hecat hold thee perchance, or Pan ?
 Doth She of the Mountains work her ban,
 Or the dread Corybantes bind thee ?

Others.

Nay, is it sin that upon thee lies,
 Sin of forgotten sacrifice,
 In thine own Dictynna's sea-wild eyes ?
 Who in Limna here can find thee ;
 For the Deep's dry floor is her easy way,
 And she moves in the salt wet whirl of the spray.

Other Women.

Or doth the Lord of Erechtheus' race,
 Thy Theseus, watch for a fairer face,
 For secret arms in a silent place,
 Far from thy love or chiding ?

Others.

Or hath there landed, amid the loud
 Hum of Piraeus' sailor-crowd,
 Some Cretan venturer, weary-browed,
 Who bears to the Queen some tidings ;
 Some far home-grief, that hath bowed her low,
 And chained her soul to a bed of woe ?

An Older Woman.

Nay—know ye not ?—this burden hath alway lain
 On the devious being of woman ; yea, burdens twain,
 The burden of Wild Will and the burden of Pain.
 Through my heart once that wind of terror sped ;
 But I, in fear confessed,

Cried from the dark to Her in heavenly bliss,
The Helper of Pain, the Bow-Maid Artemis :
Whose feet I praise for ever, where they tread
Far off among the blessed !

THE LEADER.

But see, the Queen's grey nurse at the door,
Sad-eyed and sterner, methinks, than of yore,
With the Queen. Doth she lead her hither,
To the wind and sun ?—Ah, fain would I know
What strange betiding hath blanched that brow,
And made that young life wither.

[*The NURSE comes out from the central door, followed by PHAEDRA, who is supported by two handmaids. They make ready a couch for PHAEDRA to lie upon.*

NURSE.

O sick and sore are the days of men !
What wouldst thou ? What shall I change again ?
Here is the Sun for thee ; here is the sky ;
And thy weary pillows wind-swept lie,
By the castle door.
But the cloud of thy brow is dark, I ween ;
And soon thou wilt back to thy bower within :
So swift to change is the path of thy feet,
And near things hateful, and far things sweet ;
So was it before !

Oh, pain were better than tending pain !
For that were single, and this is twain,
With grief of heart and labour of limb.
Yet all man's life is but ailing and dim,
And rest upon earth comes never.

But if any far-off state there be,
 Dearer than life to mortality ;
 The hand of the Dark hath hold thereof,
 And mist is under and mist above.
 And so we are sick for life, and cling
 On earth to this nameless and shining thing.
 For other life is a fountain sealed,
 And the deeps below us are unrevealed,
 And we drift on legends for ever !

[*PHAEDRA during this has been laid on her couch ;
 she speaks to the handmaids.*

PHAEDRA.

Yes ; lift me : not my head so low.
 There, hold my arms.—Fair arms they
 seem !—
 My poor limbs scarce obey me now !
 Take off that hood that weighs my brow,
 And let my long hair stream.

NURSE.

Nay, toss not, Child, so feveredly.
 The sickness best will win relief
 By quiet rest and constancy.
 All men have grief.

PHAEDRA (*not noticing her*).

Oh for a deep and dewy spring,
 With runlets cold to draw and drink !
 And a great meadow blossoming,
 Long-grassed, and poplars in a ring,
 To rest me by the brink !

NURSE.

Nay, Child ! Shall strangers hear this tone
So wild, and thoughts so fever-flown ?

PHAEDRA.

Oh, take me to the Mountain ! Oh,
Past the great pines and through the wood,
Up where the lean hounds softly go,
A-whine for wild things' blood,
And madly flies the dappled roe.
O God, to shout and speed them there,
An arrow by my chestnut hair
Drawn tight, and one keen glimmering spear--
Ah ! if I could !

NURSE.

What wouldst thou with them—fancies all !—
Thy hunting and thy fountain brink ?
What wouldst thou ? By the city wall
Canst hear our own brook splash and fall
Downhill, if thou wouldst drink.

PHAEDRA.

O Mistress of the Sea-lorn Mere
Where horse-hoofs beat the sand and sing,
O Artemis, that I were there
To tame Enetian steeds and steer
Swift chariots in the ring !

NURSE.

Nay, mountainward but now thy hands
Yearned out, with craving for the chase ;
And now toward the unseaswept sands
Thou roamest, where the coursers pace !

O wild young steed, what prophet knows
 The power that holds thy curb, and throws
 Thy swift heart from its race ?

[At these words PHAEDRA gradually recovers herself and pays attention.]

PHAEDRA.

What have I said ? Woe's me ! And where
 Gone straying from my wholesome mind ?
 What ? Did I fall in some god's snare ?

—Nurse, veil my head again, and blind
 Mine eyes.—There is a tear behind
 That lash.—Oh, I am sick with shame !

Aye, but it hath a sting,
 To come to reason ; yet the name
 Of madness is an awful thing.—
 Could I but die in one swift flame
 Unthinking, unknowing !

NURSE.

I veil thy face, Child.—Would that so
 Mine own were veiled for evermore,
 So sore I love thee ! . . . Though the lore
 Of long life mocks me, and I know
 How love should be a lightsome thing
 Not rooted in the deep o' the heart ;
 With gentle ties, to twine apart
 If need so call, or closer cling.—
 Why do I love thee so ? O fool,
 O fool, the heart that bleeds for twain,
 And builds, men tell us, walls of pain,
 To walk by love's unswerving rule,

The same for ever, stern and true !

For ‘ Thorough ’ is no word of peace :

‘ Tis ‘ Naught-too-much ’ makes trouble cease,
And many a wise man bows thereto.

[*The LEADER OF THE CHORUS here approaches
the NURSE.*

LEADER.

Nurse of our Queen, thou watcher old and true,
We see her great affliction, but no clue
Have we to learn the sickness. Wouldst thou tell
The name and sort thereof, 'twould like us well.

NURSE.

Small leechcraft have I, and she tells no man.

LEADER.

Thou know’st no cause ? Nor when the unrest began ?

NURSE.

It all comes to the same. She will not speak.

LEADER (*turning and looking at PHAEDRA*).

How she is changed and wasted ! And how weak !

NURSE.

‘ Tis the third day she hath fasted utterly.

LEADER.

What, is she mad ? Or doth she seek to die ?

NURSE.

I know not. But to death it sure must lead.

LEADER.

'Tis strange that Theseus takes hereof no heed.

NURSE.

She hides her wound, and vows it is not so.

LEADER.

Can he not look into her face and know ?

NURSE.

Nay, he is on a journey these last days.

LEADER,

Canst thou not force her, then ? Or think of ways
To trap the secret of the sick heart's pain ?

NURSE.

Have I not tried all ways, and all in vain ?
Yet will I cease not now, and thou shalt tell
If in her grief I serve my mistress well !

[*She goes across to where PHAEDRA lies ; and presently, while speaking, kneels by her.*

Dear daughter mine, all that before was said
Let both of us forget ; and thou instead
Be kindlier, and unlock that prisoned brow.
And I, who followed then the wrong road, now
Will leave it and be wiser. If thou fear
Some secret sickness, there be women here
To give thee comfort. [*PHAEDRA shakes her head.*

No ; not secret ? Then
Is it a sickness meet for aid of men ?
Speak, that a leech may tend thee.

Silent still ?

Nay, Child, what profits silence ? If 'tis ill
 This that I counsel, make me see the wrong :
 If well, then yield to me.

Nay, Child, I long
 For one kind word, one look !

[PHÆDRA lies motionless. The NURSE rises.

Oh, woe is me !

Women, we labour here all fruitlessly,
 All as far off as ever from her heart !
 She ever scorned me, and now hears no part
 Of all my prayers ! [Turning to PHÆDRA again.

Nay, hear thou shalt, and be,
 If so thou will, more wild than the wild sea ;
 But know, thou art thy little ones' betrayer !
 If thou die now, shall child of thine be heir
 To Theseus' castle ? Nay, not thine, I ween,
 But hers ! That barbèd Amazonian Queen
 Hath left a child to bend thy children low,
 A bastard royal-hearted—sayst not so ?—
 Hippolytus . . .

PHÆDRA.

Ah !

[She starts up, sitting, and throws the veil off.

NURSE.

That stings thee ?

PHÆDRA.

Nurse, most sore
 Thou hast hurt me ! In God's name, speak that name
 no more.

NURSE.

Thou seest ? Thy mind is clear ; but with thy mind
 Thou wilt not save thy children, nor be kind
 To thine own life.

PHAEDRA.

My children ? Nay, most dear
 I love them.—Far, far other grief is here.

NURSE (*after a pause, wondering*).

Thy hand is clean, O Child, from stain of blood ?

PHAEDRA.

My hand is clean ; but is my heart, O God ?

NURSE.

Some enemy's spell hath made thy spirit dim ?

PHAEDRA.

He hates me not that slays me, nor I him.

NURSE.

Theseus, the King, hath wronged thee in man's wise ?

PHAEDRA.

Ah, could but I stand guiltless in his eyes !

NURSE.

O speak ! What is this death-fraught mystery ?

PHAEDRA.

Nay, leave me to my wrong. I wrong not thee.

NURSE (*suddenly throwing herself in supplication at PHAEDRA's feet*).

Not wrong me, whom thou wouldest all desolate leave !

PHAEDRA (*rising and trying to move away*).

What wouldest thou ? Force me ? Clinging to my sleeve ?

NURSE.

Yea, to thy knees ; and weep ; and let not go !

PHAEDRA.

Woe to thee, Woman, if thou learn it, woe !

NURSE.

I know no bitterer woe than losing thee.

PHAEDRA.

I am lost ! Yet the deed shall honour me.

NURSE.

Why hide what honours thee ? 'Tis all I claim !

PHAEDRA.

Why, so I build up honour out of shame !

NURSE.

Then speak, and higher still thy fame shall stand.

PHAEDRA.

Go, in God's name !—Nay, leave me ; loose my hand !

NURSE.

Never, until thou grant me what I pray.

PHAEDRA (*yielding, after a pause*).

So be it. I dare not tear that hand away.

NURSE (*rising and releasing PHAEDRA*).

Tell all thou wilt, Daughter. I speak no more.

PHAEDRA (*after a long pause*).

Mother, poor Mother, that didst love so sore !

NURSE.

What mean'st thou, Child ? The Wild Bull of the Tide ?

PHAEDRA.

And thou, sad sister, Dionysus' bride !

NURSE.

Child ! wouldest thou shame the house where thou wast born ?

PHAEDRA.

And I the third, sinking most all-forlorn !

NURSE (*to herself*).

I am all lost and feared. What will she say ?

PHAEDRA.

From there my grief comes, not from yesterday.

NURSE.

I come no nearer to thy parable.

PHAEDRA.

Oh, would that thou couldst tell what I must tell !

NURSE.

I am no seer in things I wot not of.

PHAEDRA (*again hesitating*).

What is it that they mean, who say men . . . love?

NURSE.

A thing most sweet, my Child, yet dolorous.

PHAEDRA.

Only the half, belike, hath fallen on us!

NURSE (*starting*).

On thee? Love?—Oh, what sayst thou? What man's son?

PHAEDRA.

What man's? There was a Queen, an Amazon . . .

NURSE.

Hippolytus, sayst thou?

PHAEDRA (*again wrapping her face in the veil*).

Nay, 'twas thou, not I!

[*PHAEDRA sinks back on the couch and covers her face again. The NURSE starts violently from her and walks up and down.*

NURSE.

O God! what wilt thou say, Child? Wouldst thou try
To kill me?—Oh, 'tis more than I can bear;
Women, I will no more of it, this glare
Of hated day, this shining of the sky.
I will fling down my body, and let it lie
Till life be gone!

Women, God rest with you,
 My works are over ! For the pure and true
 Are forced to evil, against their own heart's vow,
 And love it !

[*She suddenly sees the Statue of CYPRIS, and stands with her eyes riveted upon it.*

Ah, Cyprian ! No god art thou,
 But more than god, and greater, that hath thrust
 Me and my queen and all our house to dust !

[*She throws herself on the ground close to the statue.*

CHORUS.

Some Women.

O Women, have ye heard ? Nay, dare ye hear
 The desolate cry of the young Queen's misery ?

A Woman.

My Queen, I love thee dear,
 Yet liefer were I dead than framed like thee.

Others.

Woe, woe to me for this thy bitter bane,
 Surely the food man feeds upon is pain !

Others.

How wilt thou bear thee through this livelong day,

Lost, and thine evil naked to the light ?

Strange things are close upon us—who shall say

How strange ?—save one thing that is plain to sight,
 The stroke of the Cyprian and the fall thereof
 On thee, thou child of the Isle of fearful Love !

[*PHAEDRA during this has risen from the couch and comes forward collectedly. As she speaks the NURSE gradually rouses herself, and listens more calmly.*

PHAEDRA.

O Women, dwellers in this portal-seat
Of Pelops' land, gazing towards my Crete,
How oft, in other days than these, have I
Through night's long hours thought of man's misery,
And how this life is wrecked ! And, to mine eyes,
Not in man's knowledge, not in wisdom, lies
The lack that makes for sorrow. Nay, we scan
And know the right—for wit hath many a man—
But will not to the last end strive and serve.
For some grow too soon weary, and some swerve
To other paths, setting before the Right
The diverse far-off image of Delight ;
And many are delights beneath the sun !
Long hours of converse ; and to sit alone
Musing—a deadly happiness !—and Shame :
Though two things there be hidden in one name,
And Shame can be slow poison if it will !

This is the truth I saw then, and see still ;
Nor is there any magic that can stain
That white truth for me, or make me blind again.
Come, I will show thee how my spirit hath moved.
When the first stab came, and I knew I loved,
I cast about how best to face mine ill.
And the first thought that came, was to be still
And hide my sickness.—For no trust there is
In man's tongue, that so well admonishes
And counsels and betrays, and waxes fat
With griefs of its own gathering !—After that
I would my madness bravely bear, and try
To conquer by mine own heart's purity.

My third mind, when these two availed me naught

To quell love, was to die—

[*Motion of protest among the Women.*
the best, best thought—

—Gainsay me not—of all that man can say !
I would not have mine honour hidden away ;
Why should I have my shame before men's eyes
Kept living ? And I knew, in deadly wise,
Shame was the deed and shame the suffering ;
And I a woman, too, to face the thing,
Despised of all !

Oh, utterly accurst

Be she of women, whoso dared the first
To cast her honour out to a strange man !
'Twas in some great house, surely, that began
This plague upon us ; then the baser kind,
When the good led towards evil, followed blind
And joyous ! Cursed be they whose lips are clean
And wise and seemly, but their hearts within
Rank with bad daring ! How can they, O Thou
That walkest on the waves, great Cyprian, how
Smile in their husbands' faces, and not fall,
Not cower before the Darkness that knows all,
Aye, dread the dead still chambers, lest one day
The stones find voice, and all be finished !

Nay,

Friends, 'tis for this I die ; lest I stand there
Having shamed my husband and the babes I bare.
In ancient Athens they shall some day dwell,
My babes, free men, free-spoken, honourable,
And when one asks their mother, proud of me !
For, oh, it cows a man, though bold he be,
To know a mother's or a father's sin.

'Tis written, one way is there, one, to win

This life's race, could man keep it from his birth,
A true clean spirit. And through all this earth
To every false man, that hour comes apace
When Time holds up a mirror to his face,
And girl-like, marvelling, there he stares to see
How foul his heart ! Be it not so with me !

LEADER OF CHORUS.

Ah God, how sweet is virtue, and how wise,
And honour its due meed in all men's eyes !

NURSE (*who has now risen and recovered herself*).

Mistress, a sharp swift terror struck me low
A moment since, hearing of this thy woe.
But now—I was a coward ! And men say
Our second thought the wiser is alway.

This is no monstrous thing ; no grief too dire
To meet with quiet thinking. In her ire
A most strong goddess hath swept down on thee.
Thou lovest. Is that so strange ? Many there be
Beside thee ! . . . And because thou lovest, wilt fall
And die ! And must all lovers die, then ? All
That are or shall be ? A blithe law for them !
Nay, when in might she swoops, no strength can stem
Cypris ; and if man yields him, she is sweet ;
But is he proud and stubborn ? From his feet
She lifts him, and—how think you ?—flings to scorn !

She ranges with the stars of eve and morn,
She wanders in the heaving of the sea,
And all life lives from her.—Aye, this is she
That sows Love's seed and brings Love's fruit to
birth ;
And great Love's brethren are all we on earth !

Nay, they who con grey books of ancient days
 Or dwell among the Muses, tell—and praise—
 How Zeus himself once yearned for Semelê ;
 How maiden Eôs in her radiancy
 Swept Kephalos to heaven away, away,
 For sore love's sake. And there they dwell, men
 say,
 And fear not, fret not ; for a thing too stern
 Hath met and crushed them !

And must thou, then, turn
 And struggle ? Sprang there from thy father's blood
 Thy little soul all lonely ? Or the god
 That rules thee, is he other than our gods ?

Nay, yield thee to men's ways, and kiss their rods !
 How many, deem'st thou, of men good and wise,
 Know their own home's blot, and avert their eyes ?
 How many fathers, when a son has strayed
 And toiled beneath the Cyprian, bring him aid,
 Not chiding ? And man's wisdom e'er hath been
 To keep what is not good to see, unseen !

A straight and perfect life is not for man ;
 Nay, in a shut house, let him, if he can,
 'Mid sheltered rooms, make all lines true. But here,
 Out in the wide sea fallen, and full of fear,
 Hopest thou so easily to swim to land ?

Canst thou but set thine ill days on one hand
 And more good days on the other, verily,
 O child of woman, life is well with thee !

[She pauses, and then draws nearer to PHAEDRA.
 Nay, dear my daughter, cease thine evil mind,
 Cease thy fierce pride ! For pride it is, and blind,
 To seek to outpass gods !—Love on and dare :
 A god hath willed it ! And, since pain is there,

Make the pain sleep ! Songs are there to bring calm,
 And magic words. And I shall find the balm,
 Be sure, to heal thee. Else in sore dismay
 Were men, could not we women find our way !

LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

Help is there, Queen, in all this woman says,
 To ease thy suffering. But 'tis thee I praise ;
 Albeit that praise is harder to thine ear
 Than all her chiding was, and bitterer !

PHAEDRA.

Oh, this it is hath flung to dogs and birds
 Men's lives and homes and cities—fair false words !
 Oh, why speak things to please our ears ? We crave
 Not that. 'Tis honour, honour, we must save !

NURSE.

Why prate so proud ? 'Tis no words, brave nor base,
 Thou cravest ; 'tis a man's arms !

[PHAEDRA moves indignantly.

Up and face

The truth of what thou art, and name it straight !
 Were not thy life thrown open here for Fate
 To beat on ; hadst thou been a woman pure
 Or wise or strong ; never had I for lure
 Of joy nor heartache led thee on to this !
 But when a whole life one great battle is,
 To win or lose—no man can blame me then.

PHAEDRA.

Shame on thee ! Lock those lips, and ne'er again
 Let word nor thought so foul have harbour there !

NURSE.

Foul, if thou wilt : but better than the fair
 For thee and me. And better, too, the deed
 Behind them, if it save thee in thy need,
 Than that word Honour thou wilt die to win !

PHAEDRA.

Nay, in God's name,—such wisdom and such sin
 Are all about thy lips !—urge me no more.
 For all the soul within me is wrought o'er
 By Love ; and if thou speak and speak, I may
 Be spent, and drift where now I shrink away.

NURSE.

Well, if thou wilt !—'Twere best never to err,
 But, having erred, to take a counsellor
 Is second.—Mark me now. I have within
 Love-philtres, to make peace where storm hath been,
 That, with no shame, no scathe of mind, shall save
 Thy life from anguish ; wilt but thou be brave !

[*To herself, reflecting.*

Ah, but from him, the well-beloved, some sign
 We need, or word, or raiment's hem, to twine
 Amid the charm, and one spell knit from twain.

PHAEDRA.

Is it a potion or a salve ? Be plain.

NURSE.

Who knows ? Seek to be helped, Child, not to know.

PHAEDRA.

Why art thou ever subtle ? I dread thee, so.

NURSE.

Thou wouldest dread everything!—What dost thou
dread?

PHAEDRA.

Iest to his ear some word be whisperèd.

NURSE.

Let be, Child! I will make all well with thee!
—Only do thou, O Cyprian of the Sea,
Be with me! And mine own heart, come what
may,
Shall know what ear to seek, what word to say!

[The NURSE, having spoken these last words in prayer apart to the Statue of CYPRIS, turns back and goes into the house. PHAEDRA sits pensive again on her couch till towards the end of the following Song, when she rises and bends close to the door.]

CHORUS.

Erôs, Erôs, who blindest, tear by tear,
Men's eyes with hunger; thou swift Foe,
that pliest

Deep in our hearts joy like an edged spear;
Come not to me with Evil haunting near,
Wrath on the wind, nor jarring of the clear
Wing's music as thou fliest!

There is no shaft that burneth, not in fire,
Not in wild stars, far off and flinging fear,
As in thine hands the shaft of All Desire,
Erôs, Child of the Highest!

In vain, in vain, by old Alpheüs' shore
 The blood of many bulls doth stain the river,
 And all Greece bows on Phœbus' Pythian floor ;
 Yet bring we to the Master of Man no store,
 The Keybearer, who standeth at the door
 Close-barred, where hideth ever
 The heart of the shrine. Yea, though he sack
 man's life
 Like a sacked city, and moveth evermore
 Girt with calamity and strange ways of strife,
 Him have we worshipped never !

There roamed a Steed in Oechalia's wild,
 A Maid without yoke, without Master,
 And Love she knew not, that far King's child :
 But he came, he came, with a song in the night,
 With fire, with blood ; and she strove in flight,
 A Torrent Spirit, a Maenad white,
 Faster and vainly faster,
 Sealed unto Heracles by the Cyprian's Might.
 Alas, thou Bride of Disaster !

O Mouth of Dirce, O god-built wall,
 That Dirce's wells run under,
 Ye know the Cyprian's fleet footfall !
 Ye saw the heaven's around her flare,
 When she lulled to her sleep that Mother fair
 Of Twy-born Bacchus, and decked her there
 The Bride of the bladed Thunder.
 For her breath is on all that hath life, and she floats in
 the air,
 Bee-like, death-like, a wonder.
 [During the last lines PHAEDRA has approached
 the door and is listening.]

PHAEDRA.

Silence, ye Women ! Something is amiss.

LEADER.

How ? In the house ?—Phaedra, what fear is this ?

PHAEDRA.

Let me but listen ! There are voices. Hark !

LEADER.

I hold my peace : yet is thy presage dark.

PHAEDRA.

Oh, misery !

O God, that such a thing should fall on me !

LEADER.

What sound, what word,
O Woman, Friend, makes that sharp terror start
Out at thy lips ? What ominous cry half-heard
Hath leapt upon thine heart ?

PHAEDRA.

I am undone !—Bend to the door and hark,
Hark what a tone sounds there, and sinks away !

LEADER.

Thou art beside the bars. 'Tis thine to mark
The castle's floating message. Say, Oh, say
What thing hath come to thee ?

PHAEDRA (*calmly*).

Why, what thing should it be ?
The son of that proud Amazon speaks again
In bitter wrath : speaks to my handmaiden !

LEADER.

I hear a noise of voices, nothing clear.
 For thee the din hath words, as through barred locks
 Floating, at thy heart it knocks.

PHAEDRA.

“Pander of Sin” it says.—Now canst thou hear?—
 And there: “Betrayer of a master’s bed.”

LEADER.

Ah me, betrayed! Betrayed!
 Sweet Princess, thou art ill bested,
 Thy secret brought to light, and ruin near,
 By her thou heldest dear,
 By her that should have loved thee and obeyed!

PHAEDRA.

Aye, I am slain. She thought to help my fall
 With love instead of honour, and wrecked all.

LEADER.

Where wilt thou turn thee, where?
 And what help seek, O wounded to despair?

PHAEDRA.

I know not, save one thing, to die right soon.
 For such as me God keeps no other boon.

[*The door in the centre bursts open, and HIPPOLYTUS comes forth, closely followed by the NURSE.* PHAEDRA cowers aside.]

HIPPOLYTUS.

O Mother Earth, O Sun that makest clean,
 What poison have I heard, what speechless sin!

NURSE.

Hush, O my Prince, lest others mark, and guess . . .

HIPPOLYTUS.

I have heard horrors ! Shall I hold my peace ?

NURSE.

Yea, by this fair right arm, Son, by thy pledge . . .

HIPPOLYTUS.

Down with that hand ! Touch not my garment's
edge !

NURSE.

Oh, by thy knees, be silent or I die !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Why, when thy speech was all so guiltless ? Why ?

NURSE.

It is not meet, fair Son, for every ear !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Good words can bravely forth, and have no fear.

NURSE.

Thine oath, thine oath ! I took thine oath before !

HIPPOLYTUS.

'Twas but my tongue, 'twas not my soul that swore.

NURSE.

O Son, what wilt thou ? Wilt thou slay thy kin ?

HIPPOLYTUS.

I own no kindred with the spawn of sin !

[*He flings her from him.*

NURSE.

Nay, spare me ! Man was born to err ; oh, spare !

HIPPOLYTUS.

O God, why hast Thou made this gleaming snare,
Woman, to dog us on the happy earth ?
Was it Thy will to make Man, why his birth
Through Love and Woman ? Could we not have rolled
Our store of prayer and offering, royal gold,
Silver and weight of bronze before Thy feet,
And bought of God new child-souls, as were meet
For each man's sacrifice, and dwelt in homes
Free, where nor Love nor Woman goes and comes ?

How, is that daughter not a bane confessed,
Whom her own sire sends forth—(He knows her
best !)—

And, will some man but take her, pays a dower !
And he, poor fool, takes home the poison-flower ;
Laughs to hang jewels on the deadly thing
He joys in ; labours for her robe-wearing,
Till wealth and peace are dead. He smarts the less
In whose high seat is set a Nothingness,
A woman naught availing. Worst of all
The wise deep-thoughted ! Never in my hall
May she sit throned who thinks and waits and sighs !
For Cypris breeds most evil in the wise,
And least in her whose heart has naught within ;
For puny wit can work but puny sin.

Why do we let their handmaids pass the gate ?
Wild beasts were best, voiceless and fanged, to wait

About their rooms, that they might speak with none,
 Nor ever hear one answering human tone !
 But now dark women in still chambers lay
 Plans that creep out into the light of day
 On handmaids' lips— [Turning to the NURSE]

As thine accursed head

Braved the high honour of my Father's bed,
 And came to traffic. . . . Our white torrent's spray
 Shall drench mine ears to wash those words away !
 And couldst thou dream that *I* . . . ? I feel impure
 Still at the very hearing ! Know for sure,
 Woman, naught but mine honour saves ye both.
 Hadst thou not trapped me with that guileful oath,
 No power had held me secret till the King
 Knew all ! But now, while he is journeying,
 I too will go my ways and make no sound.
 And when he comes again, I shall be found
 Beside him, silent, watching with what grace
 Thou and thy mistress greet him face to face !
 Then shall I have the taste of it, and know
 What woman's guile is.—Woe upon you, woe !
 How can I too much hate you, while the ill
 Ye work upon the world grows deadlier still ?
 Too much ? Make woman pure, and wild Love tame,
 Or let me cry for ever on their shame !

[He goes off in fury to the left. PHAEDRA still cowering in her place begins to sob.]

PHAEDRA.

Sad, sad and evil-starred
 Is Woman's state.

What shelter now is left or guard ?
 What spell to loose the iron knot of fate ?

And this thing, O my God,
 O thou sweet Sunlight, is but my desert !
 I cannot fly before the avenging rod
 Falls, cannot hide my hurt.
 What help, O ye who love me, can come near,
 What god or man appear,
 To aid a thing so evil and so lost ?
 Lost, for this anguish presses, soon or late,
 To that swift river that no life hath crossed.
 No woman ever lived so desolate !

LEADER OF THE CHORUS.

Ah me, the time for deeds is gone ; the boast
 Proved vain that spake thine handmaid ; and all lost !

*[At these words PHAEDRA suddenly remembers
 the NURSE, who is cowering silently where
 HIPPOLYTUS had thrown her from him. She
 turns upon her.]*

PHAEDRA.

O wicked, wicked, wicked ! Murderess heart
 To them that loved thee ! Hast thou played thy part ?
 Am I enough trod down ?

May Zeus, my sire,
 Blast and uproot thee ! Stab thee dead with fire !
 Said I not—Knew I not thine heart ?—to name
 To no one soul this that is now my shame ?
 And thou couldst not be silent ! So no more
 I die in honour. But enough ; a store
 Of new words must be spoke and new things thought.
 This man's whole being to one blade is wrought
 Of rage against me. Even now he speeds
 To abase me to the King with thy misdeeds ;

Tell Pittheus ; fill the land with talk of sin !

Cursèd be thou, and whoso else leaps in
To bring bad aid to friends that want it not.

[*The NURSE has raised herself, and faces
PHAEDRA, downcast but calm.*

NURSE.

Mistress, thou blamest me ; and all thy lot
So bitter sore is, and the sting so wild,
I bear with all. Yet, if I would, my Child,
I have mine answer, couldst thou hearken aught.

I nursed thee, and I love thee ; and I sought
Only some balm to heal thy deep despair,
And found—not what I sought for. Else I were
Wise, and thy friend, and good, had all sped right.
So fares it with us all in the world's sight.

PHAEDRA.

First stab me to the heart, then humour me
With words ! 'Tis fair ; 'tis all as it should be !

NURSE.

We talk too long, Child. I did ill ; but, oh,
There is a way to save thee, even so !

PHAEDRA.

A way ? No more ways ! One way hast thou trod
Already, foul and false and loathed of god !
Begone out of my sight ; and ponder how
Thine own life stands ! I need no helpers now.

[*She turns from the NURSE, who creeps abashed
away into the Castle.*

Only do ye, high Daughters of Trozēn,
 Let all ye hear be as it had not been ;
 Know naught, and speak of naught ! 'Tis my last
 prayer.

LEADER.

By God's pure daughter, Artemis, I swear,
 No word will I of these thy griefs reveal !

PHAEDRA.

'Tis well. But now, yea, even while I reel
 And falter, one poor hope, as hope now is,
 I clutch at in this coil of miseries ;
 To save some honour for my children's sake ;
 Yea, for myself some fragment, though things break
 In ruin around me. Nay, I will not shame
 The old proud Cretan castle whence I came,
 I will not cower before King Theseus' eyes,
 Abased, for want of one life's sacrifice !

LEADER.

What wilt thou ? Some dire deed beyond recall ?

PHAEDRA (*musing*).

Die ; but how die ?

LEADER.

Let not such wild words fall !

PHAEDRA (*turning upon her*).

Give thou not such light counsel ! Let me be
 To sate the Cyprian that is murdering me !
 To-day shall be her day ; and, all strife past,
 Her bitter Love shall quell me at the last.

Yet, dying, shall I die another's bane !
 He shall not stand so proud where I have lain
 Bent in the dust ! Oh, he shall stoop to share
 The life I live in, and learn mercy there !

[*She goes off wildly into the Castle.*

CHORUS.

Could I take me to some cavern for mine hiding,
 In the hill-tops where the Sun scarce hath trod ;
 Or a cloud make the home of mine abiding,
 As a bird among the bird-droves of God !
 Could I wing me to my rest amid the roar
 Of the deep Adriatic on the shore,
 Where the waters of Eridanus are clear,
 And Phaëthon's sad sisters by his grave
 Weep into the river, and each tear
 Gleams, a drop of amber, in the wave.

To the strand of the Daughters of the Sunset,
 The Apple-tree, the singing and the gold ;
 Where the mariner must stay him from his onset,
 And the red wave is tranquil as of old ;
 Yea, beyond that Pillar of the End
 That Atlas guardeth, would I wend ;
 Where a voice of living waters never ceaseth
 In God's quiet garden by the sea,
 And Earth, the ancient life-giver, increaseth
 Joy among the meadows, like a tree.

O shallop of Crete, whose milk-white wing
 Through the swell and the storm-beating,

Bore us thy Prince's daughter,
 Was it well she came from a joyous home
 To a far King's bridal across the foam ?
 What joy hath her bridal brought her ?
 Sure some spell upon either hand
 Flew with thee from the Cretan strand,
 Seeking Athena's tower divine ;
 And there, where Munychus fronts the brine,
 Crept by the shore-flung cables' line,
 The curse from the Cretan water !

And, for that dark spell that about her clings,
 Sick desires of forbidden things

The soul of her rend and sever ;
 The bitter tide of calamity
 Hath risen above her lips ; and she,
 Where bends she her last endeavour ?
 She will hie her alone to her bridal room,
 And a rope swing slow in the rafters' gloom ;
 And a fair white neck shall creep to the noose,
 A-shudder with dread, yet firm to choose
 The one strait way for fame, and lose

The Love and the pain for ever.

[*The Voice of the Nurse is heard from within,
 crying, at first inarticulately, then clearly.*

VOICE.

Help ho ! The Queen ! Help, whoso hearkeneth !
 Help ! Theseus' spouse caught in a noose of death !

A WOMAN.

God, is it so soon finished ? That bright head
 Swinging beneath the rafters ! Phaedra dead !

VOICE.

O haste ! This knot about her throat is made
So fast ! Will no one bring me a swift blade ?

A WOMAN.

Say, friends, what think ye ? Should we haste within,
And from her own hand's knotting loose the Queen ?

ANOTHER.

Nay, are there not men there ? 'Tis an ill road
In life, to finger at another's load.

VOICE.

Let it lie straight ! Alas ! the cold white thing
That guards his empty castle for the King !

A WOMAN.

Ah ! 'Let it lie straight !' Heard ye what she said ?
No need for helpers now ; the Queen is dead !

[*The Women, intent upon the voices from the Castle, have not noticed the approach of THESEUS. He enters from the left ; his dress and the garland on his head show that he has returned from some oracle or special abode of a God. He stands for a moment perplexed.*

THESEUS.

Ho, Women, and what means this loud acclaim
Within the house ? The vassals' outcry came
To smite mine ears far off. It were more meet
To fling out wide the Castle gates, and greet

With joy a herald from God's Presence !

[*The confusion and horror of the Women's faces gradually affects him. A dirge-cry comes from the Castle.*

How ?

Not Pittheus ? Hath Time struck that hoary brow ?
Old is he, old, I know. But sore it were,
Returning thus, to find his empty chair !

[*The Women hesitate ; then the Leader comes forward.*

LEADER.

O Theseus, not on any old man's head
This stroke falls. Young and tender is the dead.

THESEUS.

Ye Gods ! One of my children torn from me ?

LEADER.

Thy motherless children live, most grievously.

THESEUS.

How sayst thou ? What ? My wife ? . . .

Say how she died.

LEADER.

In a high death-knot that her own hands tied.

THESEUS.

A fit of the old cold anguish—Tell me all—
That held her ? Or did some fresh thing befall ?

LEADER.

We know no more. But now arrived we be,
Theseus, to mourn for thy calamity.

[*THESEUS stays for a moment silent, and puts his hand to his brow. He notices the wreath.*

THESEUS.

What? And all garlanded I come to her
 With flowers, most evil-starred God's-messenger!

Ho, varlets, loose the portal bars; undo
 The bolts; and let me see the bitter view
 Of her whose death hath brought me to mine own.

[The great central door of the Castle is thrown open wide, and the body of PHAEDRA is seen lying on a bier, surrounded by a group of Handmaids, wailing.]

THE HANDMAIDS.

Ah me, what thou hast suffered and hast done:

A deed to wrap this roof in flame!
 Why was thine hand so strong, thine heart so bold?
 Wherefore, O dead in anger, dead in shame,
 The long, long wrestling ere thy breath was cold?

O ill-starred Wife,
 What brought this blackness over all thy life?

[A throng of Men and Women has gradually collected.]

THESEUS.

Ah me, this is the last
 —Hear, O my countrymen!—and bitterest
 Of Theseus' labours! Fortune all unblest,
 How hath thine heavy heel across me passed!
 Is it the stain of sins done long ago,

Some fell God still remembereth,
 That must so dim and fret my life with death?
 I cannot win to shore; and the waves flow

Above mine eyes, to be surmounted not.

 Ah wife, sweet wife, what name
 Can fit thine heavy lot ?

Gone like a wild bird, like a blowing flame,
In one swift gust, where all things are forgot !

 Alas ! this misery !

Sure 'tis some stroke of God's great anger rolled
 From age to age on me,
For some dire sin wrought by dim kings of old.

LEADER.

Sire, this great grief hath come to many an one,
A true wife lost. Thou art not all alone.

THESEUS.

Deep, deep beneath the Earth,
Dark may my dwelling be,
And Night my heart's one comrade, in the dearth,
O Love, of thy most sweet society.
This is my death, O Phaedra, more than thine.

[He turns suddenly on the Attendants.]

Speak who speak can ? What was it ? What malign
Swift stroke, O heart discounseled, leapt on thee ?

*[He bends over PHAEDRA ; then, as no one speaks,
looks fiercely up.]*

What, will ye speak ? Or are they dumb as death,
This herd of thralls, my high house harboureth ?

*[There is no answer. He bends again over
PHAEDRA.]*

Ah me, why shouldst thou die ?
A wide and royal grief I here behold,
Not to be borne in peace, not to be told.

As a lost man am I.

My children motherless and my house undone,
 Since thou art vanished quite,
 Purest of hearts that e'er the wandering Sun
 Touched, or the star-eyed splendour of the Night.

[*He throws himself beside the body.*

CHORUS.

Unhappy one, O most unhappy one ;
 With what strange evil is this Castle vexed !
 Mine eyes are molten with the tears that run
 For thee and thine ; but what thing follows next ?
 I tremble when I think thereon !
 [*They have noticed that there is a tablet with writing fastened to the dead woman's wrist.*
Theseus also sees it.

THESEUS.

Ha, what is this that hangs from her dear hand ?
 A tablet ! It would make me understand
 Some dying wish, some charge about her bed
 And children. 'Twas the last prayer, ere her head
 Was bowed for ever. [*Taking the tablet.*
 Fear not, my lost bride,
 No woman born shall lie at Theseus' side,
 Nor rule in Theseus' house !
 A seal ! Ah, see
 How her gold signet here looks up at me,
 Trustfully. Let me tear this thread away,
 And read what tale the tablet seeks to say.

[*He proceeds to undo and read the tablet. The Chorus breaks into horrified groups.*

SOME WOMEN.

Woe, woe ! God brings to birth
 A new grief here, close on the other's tread !
 My life hath lost its worth.
 May all go now with what is finished !
 The castle of my King is overthrown,
 A house no more, a house vanished and gone !

OTHER WOMEN.

O God, if it may be in any way,
 Let not this house be wrecked ! Help us who pray !
 I know not what is here : some unseen thing
 That shows the Bird of Evil on the wing.

[THESEUS has read the tablet and breaks out in
 uncontrollable emotion.

THESEUS.

Oh, horror piled on horror !—Here is writ . . .
 Nay, who could bear it, who could speak of it ?

LEADER.

What, O my King ? If I may hear it, speak !

THESEUS.

Doth not the tablet cry aloud, yea, shriek,
 Things not to be forgotten ?—Oh, to fly
 And hide mine head ! No more a man am I.
 Ah, God, what ghastly music echoes here !

LEADER.

How wild thy voice ! Some terrible thing is near.

THESEUS.

No ; my lips' gates will hold it back no more ;

This deadly word,

That struggles on the brink and will not o'er,

Yet will not stay unheard.

[*He raises his hand, to make proclamation to all present.*

Ho, hearken all this land !

[*The people gather expectantly about him.*

Hippolytus by violence hath laid hand

On this my wife, forgetting God's great eye.

[*Murmurs of amazement and horror ; THESEUS, apparently calm, raises both arms to heaven.*

Therefore, O Thou my Father, hear my cry,

Poseidon ! Thou didst grant me for mine own

Three prayers ; for one of these, slay now my son,

Hippolytus ; let him not outlive this day,

If true thy promise was ! Lo, thus I pray.

LEADER.

Oh, call that wild prayer back ! O King, take heed !

I know that thou wilt live to rue this deed.

THESEUS.

It may not be.—And more, I cast him out

From all my realms. He shall be held about

By two great dooms. Or by Poseidon's breath

He shall fall swiftly to the house of Death ;

Or wandering, outcast, o'er strange land and sea,

Shall live and drain the cup of misery.

LEADER.

Ah, see ! here comes he at the point of need.

Shake off that evil mood, O King : have heed

For all thine house and folk.—Great Theseus, hear !

[THESEUS stands silent in fierce gloom. HIPPOLYTUS comes in from the right.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Father, I heard thy cry, and sped in fear
To help thee.—But I see not yet the cause
That racked thee so.—Say, Father, what it was.

[*The murmurs in the crowd, the silent gloom of his Father, and the horror of the Chorus-women gradually work on Hippolytus and bewilder him. He catches sight of the bier.*

Ah, what is that ! Nay, Father, not the Queen
Dead ! (*Murmurs in the crowd.*)

'Tis most strange. 'Tis passing strange, I ween.
'Twas here I left her. Scarce an hour hath run
Since here she stood and looked on this same sun.
What is it with her ? Wherefore did she die ?

[THESEUS remains silent. *The murmurs increase.*
Father, to thee I speak. Oh, tell me, why,
Why art thou silent ? What doth silence know
Of skill to stem the bitter flood of woe ?
And human hearts in sorrow crave the more
For knowledge, though the knowledge grieve them sore.
It is not love, to veil thy sorrows in
From one most near to thee, and more than kin

THESEUS (*to himself*).

Fond race of men, so striving and so blind,
Ten thousand arts and wisdoms can ye find,
Desiring all and all imagining :
But ne'er have reached nor understood one thing,
To make a true heart there where no heart is !



HIPPOLYTUS.

That were indeed beyond man's mysteries,
 To make a false heart true against his will.
 But why this subtle talk ? It likes me ill,
 Father ; thy speech runs wild beneath this blow.

THESEUS (*as before*).

O would that God had given us here below
 Some test of love, some sifting of the soul,
 To tell the false and true ! Or through the whole
 Of men two voices ran, one true and right,
 The other as chance willed it ; that we might
 Convict the liar by the true man's tone,
 And not live duped forever, every one !

HIPPOLYTUS (*misunderstanding him ; then guessing at something of the truth*).

What ? Hath some friend proved false ?

Or in thine ear

Whispered some slander ? Stand I tainted here,
 Though utterly innocent ? [Murmurs from the crowd.
 Yea, dazed am I ;

'Tis thy words daze me, falling all awry,
 Away from reason, by fell fancies vexed !

THESEUS.

O heart of man, what height wilt venture next ?
 What end comes to thy daring and thy crime ?
 For if with each man's life 'twill higher climb,
 And every age break out in blood and lies
 Beyond its fathers, must not God devise
 Some new world far from ours, to hold therein
 Such brood of all unfaithfulness and sin ?

Look, all, upon this man, my son, his life
 Sprung forth from mine ! He hath defiled my
 wife ;

And standeth here convicted by the dead,
 A most black villain !

[HIPPOLYTUS falls back with a cry and covers his
 face with his robe.

Nay, hide not thine head !
 Pollution, is it ? Thee it will not stain.
 Look up, and face thy Father's eyes again !

Thou friend of Gods, of all mankind elect ;
 Thou the pure heart, by thoughts of ill unflecked !
 I care not for thy boasts. I am not mad,
 To deem that Gods love best the base and bad.

Now is thy day ! Now vaunt thee ; thou so pure,
 No flesh of life may pass thy lips ! Now lure
 Fools after thee ; call Orpheus King and Lord ;
 Make ecstasies and wonders ! Thumb thine hoard
 Of ancient scrolls and ghostly mysteries—
 Now thou art caught and known !

Shun men like these,
 I charge ye all ! With solemn words they chase
 Their prey, and in their hearts plot foul disgrace.

My wife is dead.—‘ Ha, so that saves thee now ? ’
 That is what grips thee worst, thou caitiff, thou !
 What oaths, what subtle words, shall stronger be
 Than this dead hand, to clear the guilt from thee ?

‘ She hated thee,’ thou sayest ; ‘ the bastard born
 Is ever sore and bitter as a thorn
 To the true brood.’—A sorry bargainer
 In the ills and goods of life thou makest her,
 If all her best-beloved she cast away
 To wreak blind hate on thee !—What, wilt thou say,

'Through every woman's nature one blind strand
Of passion winds, that men scarce understand ?'—
Are we so different? Know I not the fire
And perilous flood of a young man's desire,
Desperate as any woman, and as blind,
When Cypris stings? Save that the man behind
Has all men's strength to aid him. Nay, 'twas thou . . .

But what avail to wrangle with thee now,
When the dead speaks for all to understand,
A perfect witness!

Hie thee from this land
To exile with all speed. Come never more
To god-built Athens, not to the utmost shore
Of any realm where Theseus' arm is strong!
What? Shall I bow my head beneath this wrong,
And cower to thee? Not Isthmian Sinis so
Will bear men witness that I laid him low,
Nor Skiron's rocks, that share the salt sea's prey,
Grant that my hand hath weight vile things to slay!

LEADER.

Alas! whom shall I call of mortal men
Happy? The highest are cast down again.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Father, the hot strained fury of thy heart
Is terrible. Yet, albeit so swift thou art
Of speech, if all this matter were laid bare,
Speech were not then so swift; nay, nor so fair. . .

[*Murmurs again in the crowd.*

I have no skill before a crowd to tell
My thoughts. 'Twere best with few, that know me
well.—

Nay, that is natural ; tongues that sound but rude
 In wise men's ears, speak to the multitude
 With music.

None the less, since there is come
 This stroke upon me, I must not be dumb,
 But speak perforce. . . . And there will I begin
 Where thou beganst, as though to strip my sin
 Naked, and I not speak a word !

Dost see

This sunlight and this earth ? I swear to thee
 There dwelleth not in these one man—deny
 All that thou wilt !—more pure of sin than I.

Two things I know on earth : God's worship first ;
 Next to win friends about me, few, that thirst
 To hold them clean of all unrighteousness.
 Our rule doth curse the tempters, and no less
 Who yieldeth to the tempters.—How, thou say'st,
 'Dupes that I jest at ?' Nay ; I make a jest
 Of no man. I am honest to the end,
 Near or far off, with him I call my friend.
 And most in that one thing, where now thy mesh
 Would grip me, stainless quite ! No woman's flesh
 Hath e'er this body touched. Of all such deed
 Naught wot I, save what things a man may read
 In pictures or hear spoke ; nor am I fain,
 Being virgin-souled, to read or hear again.

My life of innocence moves thee not ; so be it.
 Show then what hath seduced me ; let me see it.
 Was that poor flesh so passing fair, beyond
 All women's loveliness ?

Was I some fond
 False plotter, that I schemed to win through her
 Thy castle's heirdom ? Fond indeed I were !

Nay, a stark madman ! ‘But a crown,’ thou sayst,
 ‘Usurped, is sweet.’ Nay, rather most unblest
 To all wise-hearted ; sweet to fools and them
 Whose eyes are blinded by the diadem.
 In contests of all valour fain would I
 Lead Hellas ; but in rank and majesty
 Not lead, but be at ease, with good men near
 To love me, free to work and not to fear.
 That brings more joy than any crown or throne.

[He sees from the demeanour of THESEUS and of the crowd that his words are not winning them, but rather making them bitterer than before. It comes to his lips to speak the whole truth.]

I have said my say ; save one thing . . . one alone.

O had I here some witness in my need,
 As I was witness ! Could she hear me plead,
 Face me and face the sunlight ; well I know,
 Our deeds would search us out for thee, and show
 Who lies !

But now, I swear—so hear me both,
 The Earth beneath and Zeus who Guards the
 Oath—

I never touched this woman that was thine !
 No words could win me to it, nor incline
 My heart to dream it. May God strike me down,
 Nameless and fameless, without home or town,
 An outcast and a wanderer of the world ;
 May my dead bones rest never, but be hurled
 From sea to land, from land to angry sea,
 If evil is my heart and false to thee !

[He waits a moment ; but sees that his Father is unmoved. The truth again comes to his lips.]

If 'twas some fear that made her cast away
 Her life . . . I know not. More I must not say.
 Right hath she done when in her was no right ;
 And Right I follow to mine own despite !

LEADER.

It is enough ! God's name is witness large,
 And thy great oath, to assoil thee of this charge.

THESEUS.

Is not the man a juggler and a mage,
 Cool wits and one right oath — what more ? — to
 assuage
 Sin and the wrath of injured fatherhood !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Am I so cool ? Nay, Father, 'tis thy mood
 That makes me marvel ! By my faith, wert thou
 The son, and I the sire ; and deemed I now
 In very truth thou hadst my wife assailed,
 I had not exiled thee, nor stood and railed,
 But lifted once mine arm, and struck thee dead !

THESEUS.

Thou gentle judge ! Thou shalt not so be sped
 To simple death, nor by thine own decree.
 Swift death is bliss to men in misery.
 Far off, friendless forever, thou shalt drain
 Amid strange cities the last dregs of pain !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Wilt verily cast me now beyond thy pale,
 Not wait for Time, the lifter of the veil ?

THESEUS.

Aye, if I could, past Pontus, and the red
Atlantic marge ! So do I hate thine head.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Wilt weigh nor oath nor faith nor prophet's word
To prove me ? Drive me from thy sight unheard ?

THESEUS.

This tablet here, that needs no prophet's lot
To speak from, tells me all. I ponder not
Thy fowls that fly above us ! Let them fly.

HIPPOLYTUS.

O ye great Gods, wherefore unlock not I
My lips, ere yet ye have slain me utterly,
Ye whom I love most ? No. It may not be !
The one heart that I need I ne'er should gain
To trust me. I should break mine oath in vain.

THESEUS.

Death ! but he chokes me with his saintly tone !—
Up, get thee from this land ! Begone ! Begone !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Where shall I turn me ? Think. To what friend's
door
Betake me, banished on a charge so sore ?

THESEUS.

Whoso delights to welcome to his hall
Vile ravishers . . . to guard his hearth withal !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Thou seekst my heart, my tears ? Aye, let it be
Thus ! I am vile to all men, and to thee !

THESEUS.

There was a time for tears and thought ; the time
Ere thou didst up and gird thee to thy crime.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Ye stones, will ye not speak ? Ye castle walls !
Bear witness if I be so vile, so false !

THESEUS.

Aye, fly to voiceless witnesses ! Yet here
A dumb deed speaks against thee, and speaks clear !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Alas !

Would I could stand and watch this thing, and see
My face, and weep for very pity of me !

THESEUS.

Full of thyself, as ever ! Not a thought
For them that gave thee birth ; nay, they are naught !

HIPPOLYTUS.

O my wronged Mother ! O my birth of shame !
May none I love e'er bear a bastard's name !

THESEUS (*in a sudden blaze of rage*).

Up, thralls, and drag him from my presence ! What ?
'Tis but a foreign felon ! Heard ye not ?

[*The thralls still hesitate in spite of his fury.*

HIPPOLYTUS.

They touch me at their peril ! Thine own hand
Lift, if thou canst, to drive me from the land.

THESEUS.

That will I straight, unless my will be done !

[HIPPOLYTUS comes close to him and kneels.

Nay ! Not for thee my pity ! Get thee gone !

[HIPPOLYTUS rises, makes a sign of submission, and slowly moves away. THESEUS, as soon as he sees him going, turns rapidly and enters the Castle. The door is closed again. HIPPOLYTUS has stopped for a moment before the Statue of ARTEMIS, and, as THESEUS departs, breaks out in prayer.

HIPPOLYTUS.

So ; it is done ! O dark and miserable !
I see it all, but see not how to tell
The tale.—O thou belovèd, Leto's Maid,
Chase-comrade, fellow-rester in the glade,
Lo, I am driven with a caitiff's brand
Forth from great Athens ! Fare ye well, O land
And city of old Erechtheus ! Thou, Trozēn,
What riches of glad youth mine eyes have seen
In thy broad plain ! Farewell ! This is the end ;
The last word, the last look !

Come, every friend
And fellow of my youth that still may stay,
Give me god-speed and cheer me on my way.

Ne'er shall ye see a man more pure of spot
 Than me, though mine own Father loves me not !

[HIPPOLYTUS goes away to the right, followed by many Huntsmen and other young men. The rest of the crowd has by this time dispersed, except the Women of the Chorus and some Men of the Chorus of Huntsmen.

CHORUS.

Men.

Surely the thought of the Gods hath balm in it alway,
 to win me

Far from my griefs ; and a thought, deep in the
 dark of my mind,

Clings to a great Understanding. Yet all the spirit
 within me

Faints, when I watch men's deeds matched with
 the guerdon they find.

For Good comes in Evil's traces,
 And the Evil the Good replaces ;
 And Life, 'mid the changing faces,
 Wandereth weak and blind.

Women.

What wilt thou grant me, O God ? Lo, this is the
 prayer of my travail—

Some well-being ; and chance not very bitter
 thereby ;

A Spirit uncrippled by pain ; and a mind not deep to
 unravel

Truth unseen, nor yet dark with the brand of
 a lie.

With a veering mood to borrow
 Its light from every morrow,
 Fair friends and no deep sorrow,
 Well could man live and die !

Men.

Yet my spirit is no more clean,
 And the west of my hope is torn,
 For the deed of wrong that mine eyes
 have seen,
 The lie and the rage and the scorn ;
 A Star among men, yea, a Star
 That in Hellas was bright,
 By a Father's wrath driven far
 To the wilds and the night.
 Oh, alas for the sands of the shore !
 Alas for the brakes of the hill,
 Where the wolves shall fear thee no more,
 And thy cry to Dictynna is still !

Women.

No more in the yoke of thy car
 Shall the colts of Enetia fleet ;
 Nor Limna's echoes quiver afar
 To the clatter of galloping feet.
 The sleepless music of old,
 That leaped in the lyre,
 Ceaseth now, and is cold,
 In the halls of thy sire.
 The bowers are discrowned and unladen
 Where Artemis lay on the lea ;
 And the love-dream of many a maiden
 Lost, in the losing of thee

A Maiden.

And I, even I,
 For thy fall, O Friend,
 Amid tears and tears,
 Endure to the end
 Of the empty years,
 Of a life run dry.
 In vain didst thou bear him,
 Thou Mother forlorn !
 Ye Gods that did snare him,
 Lo, I cast in your faces
 My hate and my scorn !
 Ye love-linked Graces,
 (Alas for the day !)
 Was he naught, then, to you,
 That ye cast him away,
 The stainless and true,
 From the old happy places ?

LEADER.

Look yonder ! Surely from the Prince 'tis one
 That cometh, full of haste and woe-begone.

[A HENCHMAN enters *in haste*.

HENCHMAN.

Ye women, whither shall I go to seek
 King Theseus ? Is he in this dwelling ? Speak !

LEADER.

Lo, where he cometh through the Castle gate !

[THESEUS comes out from the Castle.

HENCHMAN.

O King, I bear thee tidings of dire weight
 To thee, aye, and to every man, I ween,
 From Athens to the marches of Trozēn.

THESEUS.

What? Some new stroke hath touched, unknown to me,
 The sister cities of my sovranity?

HENCHMAN.

Hippolytus is . . . Nay, not dead; but stark
 Outstretched, a hairsbreadth this side of the dark.

THESEUS (*as though unmoved*).

How slain? Was there some other man, whose wife
 He had like mine defiled, that sought his life?

HENCHMAN.

His own wild team destroyed him, and the dire
 Curse of thy lips.

The boon of thy great Sire
 Is granted thee, O King, and thy son slain.

THESEUS.

Ye Gods! And thou, Poseidon! Not in vain
 I called thee Father; thou hast heard my prayer!

How did he die? Speak on. How closed the snare
 Of Heaven to slay the shamer of my blood?

HENCHMAN.

'Twas by the bank of beating sea we stood,
 We thralls, and decked the steeds, and combed each
 mane:

Weeping ; for word had come that ne'er again
The foot of our Hippolytus should roam
This land, but waste in exile by thy doom.

So stood we till he came, and in his tone
No music now save sorrow's, like our own,
And in his train a concourse without end
Of many a chase-fellow and many a friend.
At last he brushed his sobs away, and spake :
'Why this fond loitering ? I would not break
My Father's law.—Ho, there ! My coursers four
And chariot, quick ! This land is mine no more.'

Thereat, be sure, each man of us made speed.
Swifter than speech we brought them up, each steed
Well dight and shining, at our Prince's side.
He grasped the reins upon the rail : one stride
And there he stood, a perfect charioteer,
Each foot in its own station set. Then clear
His voice rose, and his arms to heaven were spread :
'O Zeus, if I be false, strike thou me dead !
But, dead or living, let my Father see
One day, how falsely he hath hated me !'

Even as he spake, he lifted up the goad
And smote ; and the steeds sprang. And down the
road
We henchmen followed, hard beside the rein,
Each hand, to speed him, toward the Argive plain
And Epidaurus.

So we made our way
Up toward the desert region, where the bay
Curls to a promontory near the verge
Of our Trozēn, facing the southward surge
Of Saron's gulf. Just there an angry sound,
Slow-swelling, like God's thunder underground,

Broke on us, and we trembled. And the steeds
Pricked their ears skyward, and threw back their heads.
And wonder came on all men, and affright,
Whence rose that awful voice. And swift our sight
Turned seaward, down the salt and roaring sand.

And there, above the horizon, seemed to stand
A wave unearthly, crested in the sky ;
Till Skiron's Cape first vanished from mine eye,
Then sank the Isthmus hidden, then the rock
Of Epidaurus. Then it broke, one shock
And roar of gasping sea and spray flung far,
And shoreward swept, where stood the Prince's car.

Three lines of wave together raced, and full
In the white crest of them, a wild Sea-Bull
Flung to the shore, a fell and marvellous Thing.
The whole land held his voice, and answering
Roared in each echo. And all we, gazing there,
Gazed seeing not ; 'twas more than eyes could bear.

Then straight upon the team wild terror fell.
Howbeit, the Prince, cool-eyed and knowing well
Each changing mood a horse has, gripped the reins
Hard in both hands ; then as an oarsman strains
Up from his bench, so strained he on the thong,
Back in the chariot swinging. But the young
Wild steeds bit hard the curb, and fled afar ;
Nor rein nor guiding hand nor morticed car
Stayed them at all. For when he veered them round,
And aimed their flying feet to grassy ground,
In front uprose that Thing, and turned again
The four great coursers, terror-mad. But when
Their blind rage drove them toward the rocky places,
Silent, and ever nearer to the traces,
It followed, rockward, till one wheel-edge grazed.

The chariot tript and flew, and all was mazed
 In turmoil. Up went wheel-box with a din,
 Where the rock jagged, and nave and axle-pin.
 And there—the long reins round him—there was he
 Dragging, entangled irretrievably.
 A dear head battering at the chariot side,
 Sharp rocks, and ripped flesh, and a voice that cried :
 ‘Stay, stay, O ye who fattened at my stalls,
 Dash me not into nothing !—O thou false
 Curse of my Father !—Help ! Help, whoso can,
 An innocent, innocent and stainless man !’

Many there were that laboured then, I wot,
 To bear him succour, but could reach him not,
 Till—who knows how ?—at last the tangled rein
 Unclasped him, and he fell, some little vein
 Of life still pulsing in him.

All beside,
 The steeds, the hornèd Horror of the Tide,
 Had vanished—who knows where ?—in that wild land.

O King, I am a bondsman of thine hand ;
 Yet love nor fear nor duty me shall win
 To say thine innocent son hath died in sin.
 All women born may hang themselves, for me,
 And swing their dying words from every tree
 On Ida ! For I know that he was true !

LEADER.

O God, so cometh new disaster, new
 Despair ! And no escape from what must be !

THESEUS.

Hate of the man thus stricken lifted me
 At first to joy at hearing of thy tale ;
 But now, some shame before the Gods, some pale

Pity^{*} for mine own blood, hath o'er me come.
I laugh not, neither weep, at this fell doom.

HENCHMAN.

How then? Behoves it bear him here, or how
Best do thy pleasure?—Speak, Lord. Yet if thou
Wilt mark at all my word, thou wilt not be
Fierce-hearted to thy child in misery.

THESEUS.

Aye, bring him hither. Let me see the face
Of him who durst deny my deep disgrace
And his own sin; yea, speak with him, and prove
His clear guilt by God's judgments from above.

[*The HENCHMAN departs to fetch HIPPOLYTUS;*
THESEUS sits waiting in stern gloom, while
the CHORUS sing. At the close of their song a
Divine Figure is seen approaching on a cloud
in the air and the voice of ARTEMIS speaks.

CHORUS.

Thou comest to bend the pride
Of the hearts of God and man,
Cypris; and by thy side,
In earth-encircling span,
He of the changing plumes,
The Wing that the world illumines,
As over the leagues of land flies he,
Over the salt and sounding sea.

For mad is the heart of Love,
And gold the gleam of his wing;
And all to the spell thereof
Bend, when he makes his spring;

All life that is wild and young
 In mountain and wave and stream,
 All that of earth is sprung,
 Or breathes in the red sunbeam ;
 Yea, and Mankind. O'er all a royal throne,
 Cyprian, Cyprian, is thine alone !

A VOICE FROM THE CLOUD.

O thou that rulest in Aegeus' Hall,
 I charge thee, hearken !

Yea, it is I,
 Artemis, Virgin of God most High.
 Thou bitter King, art thou glad withal
 For thy murdered son ?
 For thine ear bent low to a lying Queen,
 For thine heart so swift amid things unseen ?
 Lo, all may see what end thou hast won !
 Go, sink thine head in the waste abyss ;
 Or aloft to another world than this,
 Birdwise with wings,
 Fly far to thine hiding,
 Far over this blood that clots and clings ;
 For in righteous men and in holy things
 No rest is thine nor abiding !

[*The cloud has become stationary in the air.*

Hear, Theseus, all the story of thy grief !
 Verily, I bring but anguish, not relief ;
 Yet, 'twas for this I came, to show how high
 And clean was thy son's heart, that he may die
 Honoured of men ; aye, and to tell no less
 The frenzy, or in some sort the nobleness,

Of thy dead wife. One Spirit there is, whom we
That know the joy of white virginity,
Most hate in heaven. She sent her fire to run
In Phaedra's veins, so that she loved thy son.
Yet strove she long with love, and in the stress
Fell not, till by her Nurse's craftiness
Betrayed, who stole, with oaths of secrecy,
To entreat thy son. And he, most righteously,
Nor did her will, nor, when thy railing scorn
Beat on him, broke the oath that he had sworn,
For God's sake. And thy Phaedra, panic-eyed,
Wrote a false writ, and slew thy son, and died,
Lying ; but thou wast nimble to believe !

[THESEUS, at first bewildered, then dumbfounded,
now utters a deep groan.

It stings thee, Theseus ?—Nay, hear on, and grieve
Yet sorer. Wottest thou three prayers were thine
Of sure fulfilment, from thy Sire divine ?
Hast thou no foes about thee, then, that one—
Thou vile King !—must be turned against thy
son ?

The deed was thine. Thy Sea-born Sire but heard
The call of prayer, and bowed him to his word.
But thou in his eyes and in mine art found
Evil, who wouldest not think, nor probe, nor sound
The deeps of prophet's lore, nor day by day
Leave Time to search ; but, swifter than man
may,
Let loose the curse to slay thine innocent son !

THESEUS.

O Goddess, let me die !

ARTEMIS.

Nay ; thou hast done
 A heavy wrong ; yet even beyond this ill
 Abides for thee forgiveness. 'Twas the will
 Of Cypris that these evil things should be,
 Sating her wrath. And this immutably
 Hath Zeus ordained in heaven : no God may thwart
 A God's fixed will ; we grieve but stand apart.
 Else, but for fear of the Great Father's blame,
 Never had I to such extreme of shame
 Bowed me, be sure, as here to stand and see
 Slain him I loved best of mortality !

Thy fault, O King, its ignorance sunders wide
 From very wickedness ; and she who died
 By death the more disarmed thee, making dumb
 The voice of question. And the storm has come
 Most bitterly of all on thee ! Yet I
 Have mine own sorrow, too. When good men die,
 There is no joy in heaven, albeit our ire
 On child and house of the evil falls like fire.

[A throng is seen approaching ; HIPPOLYTUS enters, supported by his attendants.]

CHORUS.

Lo, it is he ! The bright young head
 Yet upright there !
 Ah, the torn flesh and the blood-stained hair ;
 Alas for the kindred's trouble !
 It falls as fire from a God's hand sped,
 Two deaths, and mourning double.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Ah, pain, pain, pain !
O unrighteous curse ! O unrighteous sire !
No hope.—My head is stabbed with fire,
And a leaping spasm about my brain.

Stay, let me rest. I can no more.
O fell, fell steeds that my own hand fed,
Have ye maimed me and slain, that loved me of yore ?
—Soft there, ye thralls ! No trembling hands
As ye lift me, now !—Who is that that stands
At the right ?—Now firm, and with measured tread,
Lift one accurséd and stricken sore
By a father's sinning.

Thou, Zeus, dost see me ? Yea, it is I ;
The proud and pure, the server of God,
The white and shining in sanctity !
To a visible death, to an open sod,
I walk my ways ;
And all the labour of saintly days
Lost, lost, without meaning !

Ah God, it crawls
This agony, over me !
Let be, ye thralls !
Come, Death, and cover me ;
Come, O thou Healer blest !

But a little more,
And my soul is clear,
And the anguish o'er !
Oh, a spear, a spear !
To rend my soul to its rest !

Oh, strange, false Curse ! Was there some blood-stained head,
 Some father of my line, unpunished,
 Whose guilt lived in his kin,
 And passed, and slept, till after this long day
 It lights. . . . Oh, why on me ? Me, far away
 And innocent of sin ?

O words that cannot save !

When will this breathing end in that last deep
 Pain that is painlessness ? 'Tis sleep I crave.

When wilt thou bring me sleep,
 Thou dark and midnight magic of the grave !

ARTEMIS.

Sore-stricken man, bethink thee in this stress,
 Thou dost but die for thine own nobleness.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Ah !

O breath of heavenly fragrance ! Though my pain
 Burns, I can feel thee and find rest again.
 The Goddess Artemis is with me here.

ARTEMIS.

With thee and loving thee, poor sufferer !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Dost see me, Mistress, nearing my last sleep ?

ARTEMIS.

Aye, and would weep for thee, if Gods could weep.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Who now shall hunt with thee or hold thy quiver ?

ARTEMIS.

He dies ; but my love cleaves to him for ever.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Who guide thy chariot, keep thy shrine-flowers fresh !

ARTEMIS.

The accursèd Cyprian caught him in her mesh !

HIPPOLYTUS.

The Cyprian ? Now I see it !—Aye, 'twas she.

ARTEMIS.

She missed her worship, loathed thy chastity !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Three lives by her one hand ! 'Tis all clear now.

ARTEMIS.

Yea, three ; thy father and his Queen and thou.

HIPPOLYTUS.

My father ; yea, he too is pitiable !

ARTEMIS.

A plotting Goddess tripped him, and he fell.

HIPPOLYTUS.

Father, where art thou ? . . . Oh, thou sufferest sore !

THESEUS.

Even unto death, child. There is joy no more.

HIPPOLYTUS.

I pity thee in this coil ; aye, more than me.

THESEUS.

Would I could lie there dead instead of thee !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Oh, bitter bounty of Poseidon's love !

THESEUS.

Would God my lips had never breathed thereof !

HIPPOLYTUS (*gently*).

Nay, thine own rage had slain me then, some wise !

THESEUS.

A lying spirit had made blind mine eyes !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Ah me !

Would that a mortal's curse could reach to God !

ARTEMIS.

Let be ! For not, though deep beneath the sod
 Thou liest, not unrequited nor unsung
 Shall this fell stroke, from Cypris' rancour sprung,
 Quell thee, mine own, the saintly and the true !

My hand shall win its vengeance, through and
 through

Piercing with flawless shaft what heart soe'er
 Of all men living is most dear to Her.

Yea, and to thee, for this sore travail's sake,
 Honours most high in Trozén will I make ;
 For yokeless maids before their bridal night
 Shall shear for thee their tresses ; and a rite
 Of honouring tears be thine in ceaseless store ;

And virgins' thoughts in music evermore
Turn toward thee, and praise thee in the Song
Of Phaedra's far-famed love and thy great wrong.

O seed of ancient Aegeus, bend thee now
And clasp thy son. Aye, hold and fear not thou !
Not knowingly hast thou slain him ; and man's way,
When Gods send error, needs must fall astray.

And thou, Hippolytus, shrink not from the King,
Thy father. Thou wast born to bear this thing.

Farewell ! I may not watch man's fleeting breath,
Nor stain mine eyes with the effluence of death.
And sure that Terror now is very near.

[*The cloud slowly rises and floats away.*

HIPPOLYTUS.

Farewell, farewell, most Blessed ! Lift thee clear
Of soiling men ! Thou wilt not grieve in heaven
For my long love ! . . . Father, thou art forgiven.
It was Her will. I am not wroth with thee. . . .
I have obeyed Her all my days ! . . .

Ah me,

The dark is drawing down upon mine eyes ;
It hath me ! . . . Father ! . . . Hold me ! Help me
rise !

THESEUS (*supporting him in his arms*).

Ah, woe ! How dost thou torture me, my son !

HIPPOLYTUS.

I see the Great Gates opening. I am gone.

THESEUS.

Gone ? And my hand red-reeking from this thing !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Nay, nay ; thou art assoiled of manslaying.

THESEUS.

Thou leav'st me clear of murder ? Sayst thou so ?

HIPPOLYTUS.

Yea, by the Virgin of the Stainless Bow !

THESEUS.

Dear Son ! Ah, now I see thy nobleness !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Pray that a true-born child may fill my place.

THESEUS.

Ah me, thy righteous and godfearing heart !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Farewell ;

A long farewell, dear Father, ere we part !

[THESEUS bends down and embraces him passionately.]

THESEUS.

Not yet !—O hope and bear while thou hast breath !

HIPPOLYTUS.

Lo, I have borne my burden. This is death. . . .

Quick, Father ; lay the mantle on my face.

[THESEUS covers his face with a mantle and rises.]

THESEUS.

Ye bounds of Pallas and of Pelops' race,
What greatness have ye lost !

Woe, woe is me !

Thou Cyprian, long shall I remember thee !

CHORUS.

On all this folk, both low and high,
A grief hath fallen beyond men's fears.
There cometh a throbbing of many tears,
A sound as of waters falling.

For when great men die,
A mighty name and a bitter cry
Rise up from a nation calling.
[They move into the Castle, carrying the body of
HIPPOLYTUS.]



NOTES ON THE HIPPOLYTUS

Prologue.—The Aphrodite of Euripides' actual belief, if one may venture to dogmatise on such a subject, was almost certainly not what we should call a goddess, but rather a Force of Nature, or a Spirit working in the world. To deny her existence you would have to say not merely, “There is no such person,” but “There is no such thing ;” and such a denial would be a defiance of obvious facts. It is in this sense that it is possible to speak of Hippolytus as “sinning against Aphrodite.”

For the purposes of drama, of course, this “thing” must be made into a person, and even represented in human form according to the current conceptions of mythology. And, once personified, she becomes, like most of the Olympians in Euripides, certainly hateful and perhaps definitely evil, though still far removed from the degraded, ultra-feminine goddess of Ovid and the handbooks of mythology. In this prologue she retains much of the impersonal grandeur of a Force of Nature. The words “I grudge it not : no grudge know I, nor hate,” are doubtless intended to be true.

P. 3, l. 11, Pittheus.]—Father of Aethra, who was Theseus' mother. Formerly King of Trozēn, now ending his days in a life of meditation.

P. 4, ll. 31 ff., She built a shrine.]—An obscure passage, in which I follow the suggestion of Dr.

Verrall (*Class. Rev.* xv. 449). Euripides is evidently giving an account of the origin of a sanctuary of Aphrodite Pandēmos on the Acropolis, which in his day was known as *'Αφροδίτη ἐπὶ Ἰππολύτῳ*, i.e. (as, at least, he imagined) “Aphrodite for Hippolytus,” or “with a view to Hippolytus.” Phaedra, he says, built this shrine *because of, thinking of*, Hippolytus —i.e. seeking to exorcise her passion for him, and to fix her errant love at home as she fixed the shrine in the rock. She perhaps—so Dr. Verrall suggests—called it Aphrodite Endēmos, “Love-at-home” or “in-the-land.” When her plan failed, and it appeared that Love will not be fixed down in one place, the name was changed to Pandēmos, “of-all-lands.” Of course it is not certain, nor even very probable, that either *Πάνδημος* or *ἐπὶ Ἰππολύτῳ* originally bore the meaning that Euripides and his contemporaries attached to them. *'Επὶ Ἰππολύτῳ*, for instance, is quite likely, in its original form, to have meant “the shrine at the place where horses are unyoked.”

P. 6, l. 73, From a green and virgin meadow.] —There are long discussions in the ancient Greek commentators, whether this meadow is real or allegorical. Is it only the garland of his adoration from the meadow of his virgin soul? “It seems odd,” says one of them, “to have a meadow which you are not allowed to enter until you can show that your good qualities do not come from education!” Doubtless it is a real sacred meadow.

Pp. 7, 8, ll. 99, 103.—In two lines, “Then why wilt thou be proud?” and “Clean? Nay, proud,” I follow my own published text, reading *σεμνὸς* for *σευνὴν* and *σεμνή*.

P. 9, l. 121, Of Ocean's tribe.]—The river Ocean was, by some accounts, the father of all fresh and pure water.

P. 10, ll. 142, 143, Hecate . . . Pan . . . the Corybantes.]—These powers all produced seizures, terrors, and ecstasies. Dictynna (often a mere alternative name for Artemis) was, strictly speaking, a Cretan sea-goddess—cf. *δίκτυον*, “a net”—a hunter of the sea as Artemis is a hunter of the land. (She is identified with Artemis on p. 59.) She can catch Phaedra in Limna, the “Mere” in the neighbourhood of Trozēn, because Limna is a dried-up lagoon that was once part of the sea, and therefore belongs to the sea powers.

P. 10, l. 151, Erechtheus.] — An old king of Athens.

P. 12, ll. 193, 194, This nameless and shining thing.] —Reading *τοῦ δ' ὅτι τοῦτο στιλβεῖ . . . δυσέρωτες*.

P. 13, l. 228, The Sea-lorn Mere.] — The dried lagoon, Limna, near Trozēn, used for chariot races. The “unseaswept sands,” just below, are the same.

P. 15, ll. 264, 265.—“Thorough” and “Naught too much” were mottoes of two of the legendary Seven Wise Men.

P. 16, l. 281, He is on a journey.] — Apparently to an oracle (see below). Perhaps there was a definite tradition saying where he had gone and why, but if so, it is lost. A modern playwright would, of course, fill in these details, for the sake of verisimilitude; the ancient playwright intentionally omits them as irrelevant, just as he omits to give proper names to his Nurses, Messengers, and Leaders of the Chorus.

P. 19, l. 325, What wouldest thou? Force me.] — It was of the nature of sin to reject a suppliant, i.e.

a person who threw himself entirely upon your mercy, and implored you. The repugnance that an ordinary person has to such a rejection was felt by the Greeks in a religious way. The ultimate sanction, if you did harden your heart, would be twofold : first, the gods would have a natural repulsion against one who formally and knowingly refused to be merciful ; secondly, the suppliant might do what the Nurse threatens to do here, and stay immovable till he died of hunger or exposure—and his death would lie at the door of his rejector !

P. 20, ll. 337–341, Mother, poor Mother, that didst love so sore.]—Phaedra thinks of the general wreck of her house through love. Her mother, Pasiphaë, wife of Minos, loved the pirate or adventurer Tauros (“The Bull”), was cast into prison by her husband, and there starved herself to death. Her sister, Ariadnë, had loved Theseus ; he saved her from her father’s vengeance, but by command of the gods left her on the lonely island of Naxos, where the god Dionysus came and carried her away.

P. 22, l. 372, The Isle of awful Love.] — Crete, because of Pasiphaë, Ariadnë, Aëropâ, the wife of Thyestes, and other heroines of terrible love-stories.

P. 23, l. 373, O Women, dwellers in this portal-seat.]—This wonderful passage is very characteristic of Euripides—a subtle and beautiful study of character expressed in a formal, self-analysing speech. The “delights” that have tempted and undone her are, first, the pleasure of long talks—with Hippolytus, or about him ; next, the pleasure of losing herself in dreams ; and thirdly, in some sense not precisely

explained, but surely not difficult to understand, a feeling of shame or cowardice. She feels that if only she had had more courage all might have been well ! Why this "shame," this yielding to fear, strikes her at this moment as a "delight," is not explained ; but it does not seem to me unnatural.

P. 25, l. 433, Mistress, a sharp, swift terror, &c.]—This speech of the Nurse, so beautiful and so full of sophistries, is typically the kind of thing that caused Euripides to be accused of immoral writing.

P. 28, l. 478, Love-philtres.] — The situation at the end of this scene seems to be this : The Nurse goes in to prepare a magic charm *which shall cure Phaedra of her love*, but mentions that, in order to prepare it, she must get something belonging to Hippolytus to weave into the charm. (Either a material object to be actually woven into the charm, or a word, to be ceremonially caught and woven in —a common device in magic.) Phaedra suspects that she means to speak to Hippolytus, and the Nurse's next words rather confirm her suspicions ; but, broken and weary as she is, she has not strength or keenness of mind enough to make sure and to prevent her doing so. A large part of her nature, no doubt, longs to have Hippolytus told, and succeeds at this critical moment in lulling to sleep her exhausted will and conscience.

P. 30, ll. 545–564, Chorus.] — The second strophe and antistrophe ("On Oechalian hills, &c."), are rather obscure. The connection of thought is : "Think of the terrible things that have befallen through love ! How Iolé, daughter of Eurytus, suffered, when the angry love of Heracles made him burn her father's house in Oechalia, and carry her off amid flames and

blood. And how Semelê, the mother of Bacchus, suffered in Thebes by the waters of Dircê, when Zeus came to her in a blaze of lightning, and his love was her death."

P. 33, l. 612, 'Twas but my tongue, 'twas not my soul that swore.]—A line constantly misrepresented and attacked (see on *Frogs*, l. 101, p. 187). In reality Hippolytus faces death rather than break the oath that he was trapped into.

P. 34, l. 616, O God, why hast thou made this gleaming snare.]—The fury of this speech, while not unnatural to the youthful saintliness of Hippolytus, is intentionally made bitter and offensive by the playwright, so as to throw our sympathies for the time entirely on the side of Phaedra. We hate Hippolytus, and can for the moment sympathise with, or at least understand, her terrible act of blind self-preservation and revenge.

P. 36, l. 690, He speeds to abase me to the King.]—He had definitely said that he would not do so; but she felt his hatred, she had no reason to trust him, she had just been betrayed by one much closer to her, and probably she had hardly even noticed the actual words in his torrent of rage.

P. 38, l. 712, Know naught and speak of naught.]—This oath of the Chorus is important for the sequel of the play. It prevents them from saving Hippolytus.

P. 39, l. 732, Could I take me to some cavern for mine hiding.]—This lovely song seems to me a good instance of the artistic value of the Greek chorus. The last scene has been tragic to the point of painfulness; the one thing that can heal the pain without spoiling the interest is an outburst of pure poetry.

And the sentiment of this song, the longing to escape to a realm, if not of happiness, at least of beautiful sadness, is so magically right.

Phaëthon, who tried to drive the chariot of the Sun and fell, was buried by the river Eridanus (afterwards identified with the Po). His sisters wept over his grave, and their tears turned to drops of amber.

P. 39, l. 742, The apple-tree, the singing and the gold.]—The Garden of the Hesperides, or Daughters of the Sunset, was in the West, near the Pillars of Heracles, which marked the utmost limit to which man might travel. The apple-tree bore golden apples, and it was here that Zeus walked in the garden and first met his bride, Hera.

P. 40, l. 756, Sure some spell upon either hand.] — A curse or spell must have come with her from Crete. It was difficult for a curse to come from one country to another. Exactly like infection, it had to be somehow carried. The women suggest that it came with Phaedra in the ship, and then, when the ship was moored in Munychia, the old harbour of Athens, it crawled up the cables to the shore.

P. 42, l. 803, A fit of the old cold anguish?] — It is characteristic of Euripides to throw these sudden lights back on the history of his characters. We never knew before (except perhaps from the Prologue) that Phaedra had had these fits of “cold anguish,” or that Theseus had noticed them. Cf. p. 56, where for the first time we have a reference to Theseus’ own turbulent youth, and his crime against the Amazon, Hippolytus’ mother. And p. 50, where we first hear that Hippolytus fasted and followed Orphic rites.

P. 42, l. 804, But now arrived we be.] — A lie, to make the avoidance of explanations easier.

Pp. 43 f., ll. 817–851.] — The laments of Theseus, though they cannot compensate for the drop of dramatic interest after Phaedra's death, are full of beauty and also of character. They bring out clearly the passionateness of the old hero, and also the way in which he only gradually, and then with increasing emotion, realises his loss.

P. 51, l. 977.] — Sinis was a robber slain by Theseus at the Isthmus of Corinth. He tied his victims to the tops of pine-trees, which he had bent to the ground, and, according to Hyginus, sent them flying in the air so that they fell and were killed; as Pausanias rather more intelligibly puts it, he tied them between two pines, which he had bent together, and then let the pines spring back and rack the men asunder. Skiron was another robber in the same neighbourhood; he made travellers wash his feet on the top of a cliff—the Skironian Rock (cf. p. 63)—and then kicked them into the sea.

Pp. 51–54, ll. 983 ff., Hippolytus' speech.] — The ineffectiveness of this speech is, of course, intentional on the poet's part. The one effective answer for Hippolytus would be to break his oath and tell the whole truth. As it is, he can do nothing but appeal to his known character, and plead passionately against all the inferences that his father has drawn as to his general hypocrisy.

P. 54, l. 1036, It is enough.] — The Chorus, debarred from announcing the truth, catch at any straws that tell in favour of the truth.

P. 54, l. 1041, Father, 'tis thy mood that makes me

marvel.]—He means, I think, to make Theseus realise that the charge is flatly incredible. “ You yourself do not believe that I have done such a thing ! I know, and you know, that you do not believe it. If you did, you would kill me on the spot, not go on talking like this.”

P. 55, l. 1057, No prophet’s lot.]—A prophet spoke from some “ sign ” or “ lot ” which he interpreted. This might be an actual “ lot,” drawn or cast ; or by extension, any other sign, from the flesh of a victim or from the flight of birds.

P. 60, l. 1142, And I, even I, &c.]—The song of this maiden may have given Racine the hint of his additional character, Aricie, the princess whom his Hippolyte loves.

P. 62, l. 1195, And down the road we henchmen followed.]—They walked or ran beside the chariot, accompanying their master to the frontier. Ancient chariots, when used for travelling, went slowly.

P. 70, l. 1391, O breath of heavenly fragrance, &c.]—This and the next line make one doubt whether Artemis was supposed to be visible, or only present as a voice. Cf. p. 6, l. 86, “ Though none may see thine eyes.”

P. 72, l. 1420, My hand shall win its vengeance.]—By causing the death of Adônis, whom Aphrodite loved. It is noteworthy how Euripides’ moral hatred of the orthodox Olympian gods breaks out even in this passage, otherwise so exquisitely beautiful. The human beings are full of love and mutual forgiveness. The goddess, radiantly lovely as she is and pure with the purity of dawn, still thinks of revenge, and—as appears at her departure—is, in some profoundly tragic

sense, unloving : a being to be adored, not to love back. The last consolation of Hippolytus is the thought of his perfect devotion to one who in the nature of things can care for him only a little : "I have obeyed Her all my days."

The thing that is missing from Artemis is exactly what is present in the beautiful vase picture of the Dawn Goddess raising in her arms the body of her slain son, Memnon.

This last scene is one of those passages which show the ultimate falseness of the distinction between Classical and Romantic. The highest poetry has the beauty of both.

THE TROJAN WOMEN

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

THE GOD POSEIDON.

THE GODDESS PALLAS ATHENA.

HECUBA, *Queen of Troy, wife of Priam, mother of Hector and Paris.*

CASSANDRA, *daughter of Hecuba, a prophetess.*

ANDROMACHE, *wife of Hector, Prince of Troy.*

HELEN, *wife of Menelaüs, King of Sparta; carried off by Paris, Prince of Troy.*

TALTHYBIUS, *Herald of the Greeks.*

MENELAUS, *King of Sparta, and, together with his brother Agamemnon, General of the Greeks.*

SOLDIERS ATTENDANT ON TALTHYBIUS AND MENELAUS.

CHORUS OF CAPTIVE TROJAN WOMEN, YOUNG AND OLD, MAIDEN AND MARRIED.

The Troädes was first acted in the year 415 B.C. “The first prize was won by Xenocles, whoever he may have been, with the four plays Oedipus, Lycaön, Bacchae and Athamas, a Satyr-play. The second by Euripides with the Alexander, Palamèdès, Troädes and Sisyphus, a Satyr-play.”—AELIAN, Varia Historia, ii. 8.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

JUDGED by common standards, the *Troädes* is far from a perfect play ; it is scarcely even a good play. It is an intense study of one great situation, with little plot, little construction, little or no relief or variety. The only movement of the drama is a gradual extinguishing of all the familiar lights of human life, with, perhaps, at the end, a suggestion that in the utterness of night, when all fears of a possible worse thing are passed, there is in some sense peace and even glory. But the situation itself has at least this dramatic value, that it is different from what it seems.

The consummation of a great conquest, a thing celebrated in paens and thanksgivings, the very height of the day-dreams of unregenerate man—it seems to be a great joy, and it is in truth a great misery. It is conquest seen when the thrill of battle is over, and nothing remains but to wait and think. We feel in the background the presence of the conquerors, sinister and disappointed phantoms ; of the conquered men, after long torment, now resting in death. But the living drama for Euripides lay in the conquered women. It is from them that he has named his play and built up his scheme of parts : four figures clearly lit and heroic, the others in varying grades of characterisation, nameless and barely articulate, mere half-heard voices of an eternal sorrow.

Indeed, the most usual condemnation of the play is not that it is dull, but that it is too harrowing ; that scene after scene passes beyond the due limits of tragic art. There are points to be pleaded against this criticism. The very beauty of the most fearful scenes, in spite of their fearfulness, is one ; the quick comfort of the lyrics is another, falling like a spell of peace when the strain is too hard to bear (cf. p. 89). But the main defence is that, like many of the greatest works of art, the *Troädes* is something more than art. It is also a prophecy, a bearing of witness. And the prophet, bound to deliver his message, walks outside the regular ways of the artist.

For some time before the *Troädes* was produced, Athens, now entirely in the hands of the War Party, had been engaged in an enterprise which, though on military grounds defensible, was bitterly resented by the more humane minority, and has been selected by Thucydides as the great crucial crime of the war. She had succeeded in compelling the neutral Dorian island of Mêlos to take up arms against her, and after a long siege had conquered the quiet and immemorially ancient town, massacred the men and sold the women and children into slavery. Mêlos fell in the autumn of 416 B.C. The *Troädes* was produced in the following spring. And while the gods of the prologue were prophesying destruction at sea for the sackers of Troy, the fleet of the sackers of Mêlos, flushed with conquest and marked by a slight but unforgettable taint of sacrilege, was actually preparing to set sail for its fatal enterprise against Sicily.

Not, of course, that we have in the *Troädes* a case of political allusion. Far from it. Euripides does not

mean Mêlos when he says Troy, nor mean Alcibiades' fleet when he speaks of Agamemnon's. But he writes under the influence of a year which to him, as to Thucydides, had been filled full of indignant pity and of dire foreboding. This tragedy is perhaps, in European literature, the first great expression of the spirit of pity for mankind exalted into a moving principle ; a principle which has made the most precious, and possibly the most destructive, elements of innumerable rebellions, revolutions, and martyrdoms, and of at least two great religions.

Pity is a rebel passion. Its hand is against the strong, against the organised force of society, against conventional sanctions and accepted Gods. It is the Kingdom of Heaven within us fighting against the brute powers of the world ; and it is apt to have those qualities of unreason, of contempt for the counting of costs and the balancing of sacrifices, of recklessness, and even, in the last resort, of ruthlessness, which so often mark the paths of heavenly things and the doings of the children of light. It brings not peace, but a sword.

So it was with Euripides. The *Troädes* itself has indeed almost no fierceness and singularly little thought of revenge. It is only the crying of one of the great wrongs of the world wrought into music, as it were, and made beautiful by "the most tragic of the poets." But its author lived ever after in a deepening atmosphere of strife and even of hatred, down to the day when, "because almost all in Athens rejoiced at his suffering," he took his way to the remote valleys of Macedon to write the *Bacchae* and to die.

G. M.

THE TROJAN WOMEN

The scene represents a battlefield, a few days after the battle. At the back are the walls of Troy, partially ruined. In front of them, to right and left, are some huts, containing those of the Captive Women who have been specially set apart for the chief Greek leaders. At one side some dead bodies of armed men are visible. In front a tall woman with white hair is lying on the ground asleep.

It is the dusk of early dawn, before sunrise. The figure of the god POSEIDON is dimly seen before the walls.

POSEIDON.

Up from Aegean caverns, pool by pool
Of blue salt sea, where feet most beautiful
Of Nereid maidens weave beneath the foam
Their long sea-dances, I, their lord, am come,
Poseidon of the Sea. 'Twas I whose power,
With great Apollo, builded tower by tower
These walls of Troy ; and still my care doth stand
True to the ancient People of my hand ;
Which now as smoke is perished, in the shock
Of Argive spears. Down from Parnassus' rock
The Greek Epeios came, of Phocian seed,
And wrought by Pallas' mysteries a Steed
Marvellous, big with arms ; and through my wall
It passed, a death-sraught image magical.

The groves are empty and the sanctuaries
Run red with blood. Unburied Priam lies
By his own hearth, on God's high altar-stair,
And Phrygian gold goes forth and raiment rare
To the Argive ships ; and weary soldiers roam
Waiting the wind that blows at last for home,
For wives and children, left long years away,
Beyond the seed's tenth fullness and decay,
To work this land's undoing.

And for me,

Since Argive Hera conquereth, and she
Who wrought with Hera to the Phrygians' woe,
Pallas, behold, I bow mine head and go
Forth from great Ilion and mine altars old.
When a still city lieth in the hold
Of Desolation, all God's spirit there
Is sick and turns from worship.—Hearken where
The ancient River waileth with a voice
Of many women, portioned by the choice
Of war amid new lords, as the lots leap
For Thessaly, or Argos, or the steep
Of Theseus' Rock. And others yet there are,
High women, chosen from the waste of war
For the great kings, behind these portals hid ;
And with them that Laconian Tyndarid,
Helen, like them a prisoner and a prize.

And this unhappy one—would any eyes
Gaze now on Hecuba ? Here at the Gates
She lies 'mid many tears for many fates
Of wrong. One child beside Achilles' grave
In secret slain, Polyxena the brave,
Lies bleeding. Priam and his sons are gone ;
And, lo, Cassandra, she the Chosen One,

Whom Lord Apollo spared to walk her way
 A swift and virgin spirit, on this day
 Lust hath her, and she goeth garlanded
 A bride of wrath to Agamemnon's bed.

[He turns to go ; and another divine Presence becomes visible in the dusk. It is the goddess PALLAS ATHENA.]

O happy long ago, farewell, farewell,
 Ye shining towers and mine own citadel ;
 Broken by Pallas, Child of God, or still
 Thy roots had held thee true.

PALLAS.

Is it the will
 Of God's high Brother, to whose hand is given
 Great power of old, and worship of all Heaven,
 To suffer speech from one whose enmities
 This day are cast aside ?

POSEIDON.

His will it is :
 Kindred and long companionship withal,
 Most high Athena, are things magical.

PALLAS.

Blest be thy gentle mood !—Methinks I see
 A road of comfort here, for thee and me.

POSEIDON.

Thou hast some counsel of the Gods, or word
 Spoken of Zeus ? Or is it tidings heard
 From some far Spirit ?

PALLAS.

For this Ilion's sake,
Whereon we tread, I seek thee, and would make
My hand as thine.

POSEIDON.

Hath that old hate and deep
Failed, where she lieth in her ashen sleep ?
Thou pitiest her ?

PALLAS.

Speak first ; wilt thou be one
In heart with me and hand till all be done ?

POSEIDON.

Yea ; but lay bare thy heart. For this land's sake
Thou comest, not for Hellas ?

PALLAS.

I would make
Mine ancient enemies laugh for joy, and bring
On these Greek ships a bitter homecoming.

POSEIDON.

Swift is thy spirit's path, and strange withal,
And hot thy love and hate, where'er they fall.

PALLAS.

A deadly wrong they did me, yea within
Mine holy place : thou knowest ?

POSEIDON.

I know the sin
Of Ajax, when he cast Cassandra down . . .

PALLAS.

And no man rose and smote him ; not a frown
Nor word from all the Greeks !

POSEIDON.

And 'twas thine hand
That gave them Troy !

PALLAS.

Therefore with thee I stand
To smite them.

POSEIDON.

All thou cravest, even now
Is ready in mine heart. What seekest thou ?

PALLAS.

An homecoming that striveth ever more
And cometh to no home.

POSEIDON.

Here on the shore
Wouldst hold them or amid mine own salt foam ?

PALLAS.

When the last ship hath bared her sail for home !
Zeus shall send rain, long rain and flaw of driven
Hail, and a whirling darkness blown from heaven ;

To me his levin-light he promiseth
 O'er ships and men, for scourging and hot death :
 Do thou make wild the roads of the sea, and steep
 With war of waves and yawning of the deep,
 Till dead men choke Euboea's curling bay.
 So Greece shall dread even in an after day
 My house, nor scorn the Watchers of strange lands !

POSEIDON.

I give thy boon unbartered. These mine hands
 Shall stir the waste Aegean ; reefs that cross
 The Delian pathways, jag-torn Myconos,
 Scyros and Lemnos, yea, and storm-driven
 Caphereus with the bones of drownèd men
 Shall glut him.—Go thy ways, and bid the Sire
 Yield to thine hand the arrows of his fire.
 Then wait thine hour, when the last ship shall wind
 Her cable coil for home !

[Exit PALLAS.]

How are ye blind,
 Ye treaders down of cities, ye that cast
 Temples to desolation, and lay waste
 Tombs, the untrodden sanctuaries where lie
 The ancient dead ; yourselves so soon to die !

[Exit POSEIDON.]

The day slowly dawns : HECUBA wakes.

HECUBA.

Up from the earth, O weary head !
 This is not Troy, about, above—
 Not Troy, nor we the lords thereof.
 Thou breaking neck, be strengthenèd !

Endure and chafe not. The winds rave
And falter. Down the world's wide road,
Float, float where streams the breath of God ;
Nor turn thy prow to breast the wave.

Ah woe ! . . . For what woe lacketh here ?
My children lost, my land, my lord.
O thou great wealth of glory, stored
Of old in Ilion, year by year

We watched . . . and wert thou nothingness ?
What is there that I fear to say ?
And yet, what help ? . . . Ah, well-a-day,
This ache of lying, comfortless

And haunted ! Ah, my side, my brow
And temples ! All with changeful pain
My body rocketh, and would fain
Move to the tune of tears that flow :
For tears are music too, and keep
A song unheard in hearts that weep.

[She rises and gazes towards the Greek ships
far off on the shore.

O ships, O crowding faces
Of ships, O hurrying beat
Of oars as of crawling feet,
How found ye our holy places ?
Threading the narrows through,
Out from the gulfs of the Greek,
Out to the clear dark blue,
With hate ye came and with joy,
And the noise of your music flew,
Clarion and pipe did shriek,

As the coiled cords ye threw,
Held in the heart of Troy !

What sought ye then that ye came ?
A woman, a thing abhorred :
A King's wife that her lord
Hateth : and Castor's shame
Is hot for her sake, and the reeds
Of old Eurôtas stir
With the noise of the name of her.
She slew mine ancient King,
The Sower of fifty Seeds,
And cast forth mine and me,
As shipwrecked men, that cling
To a reef in an empty sea.

Who am I that I sit
Here at a Greek king's door,
Yea, in the dust of it ?
A slave that men drive before,
A woman that hath no home,
Weeping alone for her dead ;
A low and bruised head,
And the glory struck therefrom.

[She starts up from her solitary brooding, and calls to the other Trojan Women in the huts.]

O Mothers of the Brazen Spear,
And maidens, maidens, brides of shame,
Troy is a smoke, a dying flame ;
Together we will weep for her :
I call ye as a wide-wing'd bird
Calleth the children of her fold,

To cry, ah, not the cry men heard
 In Ilion, not the songs of old,
 That echoed when my hand was true
 On Priam's sceptre, and my feet
 Touched on the stone one signal beat,
 And out the Dardan music rolled ;
 And Troy's great Gods gave ear thereto.
 [*The door of one of the huts on the right opens, and the Women steal out severally, startled and afraid.*

FIRST WOMAN.

[Strophe I.]

How say'st thou? Whither moves thy cry,
 Thy bitter cry? Behind our door
 We heard thy heavy heart outpour
 Its sorrow : and there shivered by
 Fear and a quick sob shaken
 From prisoned hearts that shall be free no more !

HECUBA.

Child, 'tis the ships that stir upon the shore . . .

SECOND WOMAN.

The ships, the ships awaken !

THIRD WOMAN.

Dear God, what would they? Overseas
 Bear me afar to strange cities ?

HECUBA.

Nay, child, I know not. Dreams are these,
 Fears of the hope-forsaken.

FIRST WOMAN.

Awake, O daughters of affliction, wake
 And learn your lots! Even now the Argives break
 Their camp for sailing !

HECUBA.

Ah, not Cassandra ! Wake not her
 Whom God hath maddened, lest the foe
 Mock at her dreaming. Leave me clear
 From that one edge of woe.

O Troy, my Troy, thou diest here
 Most lonely ; and most lonely we
 The living wander forth from thee,
 And the dead leave thee wailing !

[One of the huts on the left is now open, and the rest of the CHORUS come out severally. Their number eventually amounts to fifteen.]

FOURTH WOMAN.

[Antistrophe 1.]

out of
 Out of the tent of the Greek king
 I steal, my Queen, with trembling breath :
 What means thy call ? Not death ; not death !
 They would not slay so low a thing !

FIFTH WOMAN.

O, 'tis the ship-folk crying
 To deck the galleys : and we part, we part !

HECUBA.

Nay, daughter : take the morning to thine heart.

FIFTH WOMAN.

My heart with dread is dying !

SIXTH WOMAN.

An herald from the Greek hath come !

FIFTH WOMAN.

How have they cast me, and to whom
 A bondmaid ?

HECUBA. Peace, child : wait thy doom.
 Our lots are near the trying.

FOURTH WOMAN.

Argos, belike, or Phthia shall it be,
 Or some lone island of the tossing sea,
 Far, far from Troy ?

HECUBA.

And I the aged, where go I,
 A winter-frozen bee, a slave
 Death-shapen, as the stones that lie
 Hewn on a dead man's grave :
 The children of mine enemy
 To foster, or keep watch before
 The threshold of a master's door,
 I that was Queen in Troy !

A WOMAN TO ANOTHER.

[Strophe 2]

And thou, what tears can tell thy doom ?

THE OTHER.

The shuttle still shall flit and change
 Beneath my fingers, but the loom,
 Sister, be strange.

ANOTHER (*wildly*).

Look, my dead child ! My child, my love,
 The last look. . . .

ANOTHER. Oh, there cometh worse.
 A Greek's bed in the dark. . . .

ANOTHER. God curse
 That night and all the powers thereof !

ANOTHER.

Or pitchers to and fro to bear
 To some Pirénê on the hill,
 Where the proud water craveth still
 Its broken-hearted minister.

ANOTHER.

God guide me yet to Theseus' land,
 The gentle land, the famed afar . . .

ANOTHER.

But not the hungry foam—Ah, never!—
 Of fierce Eurotas, Helen's river,
 To bow to Menelaus' hand,
 That wasted Troy with war!

A WOMAN.

[*Antistrophe 2.*

They told us of a land high-born,
 Where glimmers round Olympus' roots
 A lordly river, red with corn
 And burdened fruits.

ANOTHER.

Aye, that were next in my desire
 To Athens, where good spirits dwell . . .

ANOTHER.

Or Aetna's breast, the deeps of fire
 That front the Tyrian's Citadel :
 First mother, she, of Sicily
 And mighty mountains : fame hath told
 Their crowns of goodness manifold. . . .

ANOTHER.

And, close beyond the narrowing sea,
 A sister land, where float enchanted
 Ionian summits, wave on wave,

And Crathis of the burning tresses
Makes red the happy vale, and blesses
With gold of fountains spirit-haunted
Homes of true men and brave !

LEADER.

But lo, who cometh : and his lips
Grave with the weight of dooms unknown :
A Herald from the Grecian ships.
Swift comes he, hot-foot to be done
And finished. Ah, what bringeth he
Of news or judgment ? Slaves are we,
Spoils that the Greek hath won !

[TALTHYBIUS, followed by some Soldiers, enters
from the left.]

TALTHYBIUS.

Thou know'st me, Hecuba. Often have I crossed
Thy plain with tidings from the Hellene host.
'Tis I, Talthybius. . . . Nay, of ancient use
Thou know'st me. And I come to bear thee news.

HECUBA.

Ah me, 'tis here, 'tis here,
Women of Troy, our long embosomed fear !

TALTHYBIUS.

The lots are cast, if that it was ye feared.

HECUBA.

What lord, what land. . . . Ah me,
Phthia or Thebes, or sea-worn Thessaly ?

TALTHYBIUS.

Each hath her own. Ye go not in one herd.

HECUBA.

Say then what lot hath any ? What of joy
Falls, or can fall on any child of Troy ?

TALTHYBIUS.

I know : but make thy questions severally.

HECUBA.

My stricken one must be
Still first. Say how Cassandra's portion lies.

TALTHYBIUS.

Chosen from all for Agamemnon's prize !

HECUBA.

How, for his Spartan bride
A tirewoman ? For Helen's sister's pride ?

TALTHYBIUS.

Nay, nay : a bride herself, for the King's bed.

HECUBA.

The sainted of Apollo ? And her own
Prize that God promiséd
Out of the golden clouds, her virgin crown ? . . .

TALTHYBIUS.

He loved her for that same strange holiness.

HECUBA.

Daughter, away, away,
Cast all away,
The haunted Keys, the lonely stole's array
That kept thy body like a sacred place !

TALTHYBIUS.

Is't not rare fortune that the King hath smiled
On such a maid ?

HECUBA.

What of that other child
Ye reft from me but now ?

TALTHYBIUS (*speaking with some constraint*).

Polyxena ? Or what child meanest thou ?

HECUBA.

The same. What man now hath her, or what doom ?

TALTHYBIUS.

She rests apart, to watch Achilles' tomb.

HECUBA.

To watch a tomb ? My daughter ? What is this ? . . .
Speak, Friend ? What fashion of the laws of Greece ?

TALTHYBIUS.

Count thy maid happy ! She hath naught of ill
To fear . . .

HECUBA.

What meanest thou ? She liveth still ?

TALTHYBIUS.

I mean, she hath one toil that holds her free
From all toil else.

HECUBA.

What of Andromache,
Wife of mine iron-hearted Hector, where
Journeyeth she ?

TALTHYBIUS.

Pyrrhus, Achilles' son, hath taken her.

HECUBA.

And I, whose slave am I,
The shaken head, the arm that creepeth by,
Staff-crutchèd, like to fall ?

TALTHYBIUS.

Odysseus, Ithaca's king, hath thee for thrall.

HECUBA.

Beat, beat the crownless head :
Rend the cheek till the tears run red !
A lying man and a pitiless
Shall be lord of me, a heart full-flown
With scorn of righteousness :
O heart of a beast where law is none,
Where all things change so that lust be fed,
The oath and the deed, the right and the wrong,
Even the hate of the forkèd tongue :
Even the hate turns and is cold,
False as the love that was false of old !

O Women of Troy, weep for me !
Yea, I am gone : I am gone my ways.
Mine is the crown of misery,
The bitterest day of all our days.

LEADER.

Thy fate thou knowest, Queen : but I know not
What lord of South or North has won my lot.

TALTHYBIUS.

Go, seek Cassandra, men ! Make your best speed,
 That I may leave her with the King, and lead
 These others to their divers lords. . . . Ha, there !
 What means that sudden light ? Is it the flare
 Of torches ?

[Light is seen shining through the crevices of the second hut on the right. He moves towards it.]

Would they fire their prison rooms,
 Or how, these dames of Troy?—'Fore God, the dooms
 Are known, and now they burn themselves and die
 Rather than sail with us ! How savagely
 In days like these a free neck chafes beneath
 Its burden ! . . . Open ! Open quick ! Such death
 Were bliss to them, it may be : but 'twill bring
 Much wrath, and leave me shamed before the King !

HECUBA.

There is no fire, no peril : 'tis my child,
 Cassandra, by the breath of God made wild.

[The door opens from within and CASSANDRA enters, white-robed and wreathed like a Priestess, a great torch in her hand. She is singing softly to herself and does not see the Herald or the scene before her.]

CASSANDRA.

Lift, lift it high :	<i>[Strophe.]</i>
Give it to mine hand !	
Lo, I bear a flame	
Unto God ! I praise his name.	
I light with a burning brand	
This sanctuary.	

EURIPIDES

Blessèd is he that shall wed,
 And blessed, blessed am I
 In Argos : a bride to lie
 With a king in a king's bed.

Hail, O Hymen red,
 O Torch that makest one !
 Weepest thou, Mother mine own ?
 Surely thy cheek is pale
 With tears, tears that wail
 For a land and a father dead.
 But I go garlanded :
 I am the Bride of Desire :
 Therefore my torch is borne—
 Lo, the lifting of morn,
 Lo, the leaping of fire !—
 For thee, O Hymen bright, /
 For thee, O Moon of the Deep,
 So Law hath charged, for the light
 Of a maid's last sleep.

Awake, O my feet, awake : [*Antistrophe.*]
 Our father's hope is won !
 Dance as the dancing skies
 Over him, where he lies
 Happy beneath the sun ! . . .
 Lo, the Ring that I make . . .
 [She makes a circle round her with the torch,
 and visions appear to her.]

Apollo ! . . . Ah, is it thou ?
 O shrine in the laurels cold,
 I bear thee still, as of old,
 Mine incense ! Be near to me now.
 [She waves the torch as though bearing incense.]

O Hymen, Hymen fleet :
 Quick torch that makest one ! . . .
 How ? Am I still alone ?
Laugh as I laugh, and twine
In the dance, O Mother mine :
 Dear feet, be near my feet !
Come, greet ye Hymen, greet
 Hymen with songs of pride :
Sing to him loud and long,
Cry, cry, when the song
 Faileth, for joy of the bride !
O Damsels girt in the gold
 Of Ilion, cry, cry ye,
For him that is doomed of old
 To be lord of me !

LEADER.

O hold the damsel, lest her tranced feet
Lift her afar, Queen, toward the Hellene fleet !

HECUBA.

O Fire, Fire, where men make marriages
Surely thou hast thy lot ; but what are these
Thou bringest flashing ? Torches savage-wild
And far from mine old dreams.—Alas, my child,
How little dreamed I then of wars or red
Spears of the Greek to lay thy bridal bed !
Give me thy brand ; it hath no holy blaze
Thus in thy frenzy flung. Nor all thy days
Nor all thy griefs have changed them yet, nor learned
Wisdom.—Ye women, bear the pine half burned

To the chamber back ; and let your drownèd eyes
Answer the music of these bridal cries !

[*She takes the torch and gives it to one of the women.*

CASSANDRA.

O Mother, fill mine hair with happy flowers,
And speed me forth. Yea, if my spirit cowers,
Drive me with wrath ! So liveth Loxias,
A bloodier bride than ever Helen was
Go I to Agamemnon, Lord most high
Of Hellas ! . . . I shall kill him, mother ; I
Shall kill him, and lay waste his house with fire
As he laid ours. My brethren and my sire
Shall win again . . .

(*Checking herself*) But part I must let be,
And speak not. Not the axe that craveth me,
And more than me ; not the dark wanderings
Of mother-murder that my bridal brings,
And all the House of Atreus down, down, down . . .

Nay, I will show thee. Even now this town
Is happier than the Greeks. I know the power
Of God is on me : but this little hour,
Wilt thou but listen, I will hold him back !

One love, one woman's beauty, o'er the track
Of hunted Helen, made their myriads fall.
And this their King so wise, who ruleth all,
What wrought he ? Cast out Love that Hate might
feed :
Gave to his brother his own child, his seed

Of gladness, that a woman fled, and fain
To fly for ever, should be turned again !

So the days waned, and armies on the shore
Of Simois stood and strove and died. Wherefore ?
No man had moved their landmarks ; none had
shook

Their walled towns.—And they whom Ares took,
Had never seen their children : no wife came
With gentle arms to shroud the limbs of them
For burial, in a strange and angry earth
Laid dead. And there at home, the same long dearth :
Women that lonely died, and aged men
Waiting for sons that ne'er should turn again,
Nor know their graves, nor pour drink-offerings,
To still the unslaked dust. These be the things
The conquering Greek hath won !

But we—what pride,
What praise of men were sweeter ?—fighting died
To save our people. And when war was red
Around us, friends upbore the gentle dead
Home, and dear women's hands about them wound
White shrouds, and here they sleep in the old
ground

Belovèd. And the rest long days fought on,
Dwelling with wives and children, not alone
And joyless, like these Greeks.

And Hector's woe,
What is it ? He is gone, and all men know
His glory, and how true a heart he bore.
It is the gift the Greek hath brought ! Of yore
Men saw him not, nor knew him. Yea, and even
Paris hath loved withal a child of heaven :

Else had his love but been as others are.

Would ye be wise, ye Cities, fly from war !
 Yet if war come, there is a crown in death
 For her that striveth well and perisheth
 Unstained : to die in evil were the stain !
 Therefore, O Mother, pity not thy slain,
 Nor Troy, nor me, the bride. Thy direst foe
 And mine by this my wooing is brought low.

TALTHYBIUS (*at last breaking through the spell
 that has held him*).

I swear, had not Apollo made thee mad,
 Not lightly hadst thou flung this shower of bad
 Bodings, to speed my General o'er the seas !

'Fore God, the wisdoms and the greatnesses
 Of seeming, are they hollow all, as things
 Of naught ? This son of Atreus, of all kings
 Most mighty, hath so bowed him to the love
 Of this mad maid, and chooseth her above
 All women ! By the Gods, rude though I be,
 I would not touch her hand !

Look thou ; I see
 Thy lips are blind, and whatso words they speak,
 Praises of Troy or shamings of the Greek,
 I cast to the four winds ! Walk at my side
 In peace ! . . . And heaven content him of his
 bride ! [He moves as though to go, but turns to
 HECUBA, and speaks more gently.
 And thou shalt follow to Odysseus' host
 When the word comes. 'Tis a wise queen thou go'st
 To serve, and gentle: so the Ithacans say.]

CASSANDRA (*seeing for the first time the Herald and all the scene*).

How fierce a slave ! . . . O Heralds, Heralds ! Yea,
Voices of Death ; and mists are over them
Of dead men's anguish, like a diadem,
These weak abhorred things that serve the hate
Of kings and peoples ! . . .

To Odysseus' gate

My mother goeth, say'st thou ? Is God's word
As naught, to me in silence ministered,
That in this place she dies ? . . . (*To herself*) No
more ; no more !

Why should I speak the shame of them, before
They come ? . . . Little he knows, that hard-beset
Spirit, what deeps of woe await him yet ;
Till all these tears of ours and harrowings
Of Troy, by his, shall be as golden things.
Ten years behind ten years athwart his way
Waiting : and home, lost and unfriended . . .

Nay :

Why should Odysseus' labours vex my breath ?
On ; hasten ; guide me to the house of Death,
To lie beside my bridegroom ! . . .

Thou Greek King,

Who deem'st thy fortune now so high a thing,
Thou dust of the earth, a lowlier bed I see,
In darkness, not in light, awaiting thee :
And with thee, with thee . . . there, where yawneth
plain

A rift of the hills, raging with winter rain,

Dead . . . and out-cast . . . and naked . . . It is I
Beside my bridegroom : and the wild beasts cry,
And ravin on God's chosen !

[She clasps her hands to her brow and feels the wreaths.]

O, ye wreaths !
Ye garlands of my God, whose love yet breathes
About me ; shapes of joyance mystical ;
Begone ! I have forgot the festival,
Forgot the joy. Begone ! I tear ye, so,
From off me ! . . . Out on the swift winds they go.
With flesh still clean I give them back to thee,
Still white, O God, O light that leadest me !

[Turning upon the Herald.]

Where lies the galley ? Whither shall I tread ?
See that your watch be set, your sail be spread.
The wind comes quick ! . . . Three Powers—mark
me, thou !—

There be in Hell, and one walks with thee now !

Mother, farewell, and weep not ! O my sweet
City, my earth-clad brethren, and thou great
Sire that begat us ; but a space, ye Dead,
And I am with you : yea, with crowned head
I come, and shining from the fires that feed
On these that slay us now, and all their seed !

*[She goes out, followed by TALTHYBIUS and the
Soldiers : HECUBA, after waiting for an instant motionless, falls to the ground.]*

LEADER OF CHORUS.

The Queen, ye Watchers ! See, she falls, she falls,
Rigid without a word ! O sorry thralls,

Too late ! And will ye leave her downstricken,
A woman, and so old ? Raise her again !

[*Some women go to HECUBA, but she refuses their aid and speaks without rising.*

HECUBA.

Let lie . . . the love we seek not is no love . . .
This ruined body ! Is the fall thereof
Too deep for all that now is over me
Of anguish, and hath been, and yet shall be ?
Ye Gods . . . Alas ! Why call on things so weak
For aid ? Yet there is something that doth seek,
Crying, for God, when one of us hath woe.
O, I will think of things gone long ago
And weave them to a song, like one more tear
In the heart of misery. . . . All kings we were ;
And I must wed a king. And sons I brought
My lord King, many sons . . . nay, that were naught ;
But high strong princes, of all Troy the best.
Hellas nor Troas nor the garnered East
Held such a mother ! And all these things beneath
The Argive spear I saw cast down in death,
And shore these tresses at the dead men's feet.

Yea, and the gardener of my garden great,
It was not any noise of him nor tale
I wept for ; these eyes saw him, when the pale
Was broke, and there at the altar Priam fell
Murdered, and round him all his citadel
Sacked. And my daughters, virgins of the fold,
Meet to be brides of mighty kings, behold,
'Twas for the Greek I bred them ! All are gone ;
And no hope left, that I shall look upon
Their faces any more, nor they on mine.

And now my feet tread on the utmost line :
 An old, old slave-woman, I pass below
 Mine enemies' gates ; and whatso task they know
 For this age basest, shall be mine ; the door,
 Bowing, to shut and open. . . . I that bore
 Hector ! . . . and meal to grind, and this racked head
 Bend to the stones after a royal bed ;
 Torn rags about me, aye, and under them
 Torn flesh ; 'twill make a woman sick for shame !
 Woe's me ; and all that one man's arms might hold
 One woman, what long seas have o'er me rolled
 And roll for ever ! . . . O my child, whose white
 Soul laughed amid the laughter of God's light,
 Cassandra, what hands and how strange a day
 Have loosed thy zone ! And thou, Polyxena,
 Where art thou ? And my sons ? Not any seed
 Of man nor woman now shall help my need.

Why raise me any more ? What hope have I
 To hold me ? Take this slave that once trod high
 In Ilion ; cast her on her bed of clay
 Rock-pillowed, to lie down, and pass away
 Wasted with tears. And whatso man they call
 Happy, believe not ere the last day fall !

CHORUS.

[Strophe.]

O Muse, be near me now, and make
 A strange song for Ilion's sake,
 Till a tone of tears be about mine ears
 And out of my lips a music break
 For Troy, Troy, and the end of the years :
 When the wheels of the Greek above me pressed,
 And the mighty horse-hoofs beat my breast ;
 And all around were the Argive spears

A towering Steed of golden rein—
 O gold without, dark steel within!—
Ramped in our gates; and all the plain
 Lay silent where the Greeks had been.
And a cry broke from all the folk
Gathered above on Ilion's rock:
“Up, up, O fear is over now!
 To Pallas, who hath saved us living,
To Pallas bear this victory-vow!”
Then rose the old man from his room,
The merry damsel left her loom,
And each bound death about his brow
 With minstrelsy and high thanksgiving!

[*Antistrophe.*

O, swift were all in Troy that day,
 And girt them to the portal-way,
Marvelling at that mountain Thing
 Smooth-carven, where the Argives lay,
And wrath, and Ilion's vanquishing:
 Meet gift for her that spareth not,
Heaven's yokeless Rider. Up they brought
Through the steep gates her offering:
 Like some dark ship that climbs the shore
On straining cables, up, where stood
Her marble throne, her hallowed floor,
 Who lusted for her people's blood.

A very weariness of joy
Fell with the evening over Troy:
And lutes of Afric mingled there
 With Phrygian songs: and many a maiden,
With white feet glancing light as air,

Made happy music through the gloom :
 And fires on many an inward room
 All night broad-flashing, flung their glare
 On laughing eyes and slumber-laden.

A MAIDEN.

I was among the dancers there
 To Artemis, and glorying sang
 Her of the Hills, the Maid most fair,
 Daughter of Zeus : and, lo, there rang
 A shout out of the dark, and fell
 Deathlike from street to street, and made
 A silence in the citadel :
 And a child cried, as if afraid,
 And hid him in his mother's veil.
 Then stalked the Slayer from his den,
 The hand of Pallas served her well !
 O blood, blood of Troy was deep
 About the streets and altars then :
 And in the wedded rooms of sleep,
 Lo, the desolate dark alone,
 And headless things, men stumbled on.
 And forth, lo, the women go,
 The crown of War, the crown of Woe,
 To bear the children of the foe
 And weep, weep, for Ilion !

[As the song ceases a chariot is seen approaching from the town, laden with spoils. On it sits a mourning Woman with a child in her arms.]

LEADER.

Lo, yonder on the heaped crest
 Of a Greek wain, Andromachê,
 As one that o'er an unknown sea
 Tosseth ; and on her wave-borne breast
 Her loved one clingeth, Hector's child,
 Astyanax . . . O most forlorn
 Of women, whither go'st thou, borne
 'Mid Hector's bronzen arms, and piled
 Spoils of the dead, and pageantry
 Of them that hunted Ilion down ?
 Aye, richly thy new lord shall crown
 The mountain shrines of Thessaly !

ANDROMACHE.

[Strophe 1.]

Forth to the Greek I go,
 Driven as a beast is driven.
 HEC. Woe, woe !
 AND. Nay, mine is woe :
 Woe to none other given,
 And the song and the crown therefor !
 HEC. O Zeus !
 AND. He hates thee sore !
 HEC. Children !
 AND. No more, no more
 To aid thee : their strife is striven !

HECUBA.

[Antistrophe 1.]

Troy, Troy is gone !
 AND. Yea, and her treasure parted.
 HEC. Gone, gone, mine own
 Children, the noble-hearted !

AND. Sing sorrow. . . .
 HEC. For me, for me !
 AND. Sing for the Great City,
 That falleth, falleth to be
 A shadow, a fire departed.

ANDROMACHE.

[Strophe 2]

Come to me, O my lover !
 HEC. The dark shroudeth him over,
 My flesh, woman, not thine, not thine !
 AND. Make of thine arms my cover !

HECUBA.

[Antistrophe 2.]

O thou whose wound was deepest,
 Thou that my children keepest,
 Priam, Priam, O age-worn King,
 Gather me where thou sleepest.

ANDROMACHE (*her hands upon her heart*).

[Strophe 3.]

O here is the deep of desire,
 HEC. (How ? And is this not woe ?)
 AND. For a city burned with fire ;
 HEC. (It beateth, blow on blow.)
 AND. God's wrath for Paris, thy son, that he died not
 long ago :

Who sold for his evil love
 Troy and the towers thereof :
 Therefore the dead men lie
 Naked, beneath the eye

Of Pallas, and vultures croak
 And flap for joy :
 So Love hath laid his yoke
 On the neck of Troy !

HECUBA.

[Antistrophe 3.]

O mine own land, my home,
 AND. (I weep for thee, left forlorn,)
 HEC. See'st thou what end is come ?
 AND. (And the house where my babes were born.)
 HEC. A desolate Mother we leave, O children, a
 City of scorn :

Even as the sound of a song
 Left by the way, but long
 Remembered, a tune of tears
 Falling where no man hears,
 In the old house, as rain,
 For things loved of yore :
 But the dead hath lost his pain
 And weeps no more.

LEADER.

How sweet are tears to them in bitter stress,
 And sorrow, and all the songs of heaviness.

ANDROMACHE.

Mother of him of old, whose mighty spear
 Smote Greeks like chaff, see'st thou what things are
 here ?

HECUBA.

I see God's hand, that buildeth a great crown
 For littleness, and hath cast the mighty down.

ANDROMACHE.

I and my babe are driven among the droves
 Of plundered cattle. O, when fortune moves
 So swift, the high heart like a slave beats low.

HECUBA.

'Tis fearful to be helpless. Men but now
 Have taken Cassandra, and I strove in vain.

ANDROMACHE.

Ah, woe is me ; hath Ajax come again ?
 But other evil yet is at thy gate.

HECUBA.

Nay, Daughter, beyond number, beyond weight
 My evils are ! Doom raceth against doom.

ANDROMACHE.

Polyxena across Achilles' tomb
 Lies slain, a gift flung to the dreamless dead.

HECUBA.

My sorrow ! . . . 'Tis but what Talthybius said :
 So plain a riddle, and I read it not.

ANDROMACHE.

I saw her lie, and stayed this chariot ;
 And raiment wrapt on her dead limbs, and beat
 My breast for her.

HECUBA (*to herself*).

O the foul sin of it !

The wickedness ! My child. My child ! Again
 I cry to thee. How cruelly art thou slain !

ANDROMACHE.

She hath died her death, and howso dark it be,
Her death is sweeter than my misery.

HECUBA.

Death cannot be what Life is, Child ; the cup
Of Death is empty, and Life hath always hope.

ANDROMACHE.

O Mother, having ears, hear thou this word
Fear-conquering, till thy heart as mine be stirred
With joy. To die is only not to be ;
And better to be dead than grievously
Living. They have no pain, they ponder not
Their own wrong. But the living that is
brought

From joy to heaviness, his soul doth roam,
As in a desert, lost, from its old home.
Thy daughter lieth now as one unborn,
Dead, and naught knowing of the lust and scorn
That slew her. And I . . . long since I drew
my bow

Straight at the heart of good fame ; and I know
My shaft hit ; and for that am I the more
Fallen from peace. All that men praise us for,
I loved for Hector's sake, and sought to win.
I knew that alway, be there hurt therein
Or utter innocence, to roam abroad
Hath ill report for women ; so I trod
Down the desire thereof, and walked my way
In mine own garden. And light words and gay

Parley of women never passed my door.
The thoughts of mine own heart . . . I craved no
more . . .

Spoke with me, and I was happy. Constantly
I brought fair silence and a tranquil eye
For Hector's greeting, and watched well the way
Of living, where to guide and where obey.

And, lo ! some rumour of this peace, being gone
Forth to the Greek, hath cursed me. Achilles' son,
So soon as I was taken, for his thrall
Chose me. I shall do service in the hall
Of them that slew . . . How ? Shall I thrust aside
Hector's beloved face, and open wide
My heart to this new lord ? Oh, I should stand
A traitor to the dead ! And if my hand
And flesh shrink from him . . . lo, wrath and despite
O'er all the house, and I a slave !

One night,

One night . . . aye, men have said it . . . maketh tame
A woman in a man's arms. . . . O shame, shame !
What woman's lips can so forswear her dead,
And give strange kisses in another's bed ?
Why, not a dumb beast, not a colt will run
In the yoke untroubled, when her mate is gone—
A thing not in God's image, dull, unmoved
Of reason. O my Hector ! best beloved,
That, being mine, wast all in all to me,
My prince, my wise one, O my majesty
Of valiance ! No man's touch had ever come
Near me, when thou from out my father's home
Didst lead me and make me thine. . . . And thou art
dead,
And I war-flung to slavery and the bread

Of shame in Hellas, over bitter seas !

What knoweth she of evils like to these,
That dead Polyxena, thou weepest for ?
There liveth not in my life any more
The hope that others have. Nor will I tell
The lie to mine own heart, that aught is well
Or shall be well. . . . Yet, O, to dream were sweet !

LEADER.

Thy feet have trod the pathway of my feet,
And thy clear sorrow teacheth me mine own.

HECUBA.

Lo, yonder ships : I ne'er set foot on one,
But tales and pictures tell, when over them
Breaketh a storm not all too strong to stem,
Each man strives hard, the tiller gripped, the mast
Manned, the hull baled, to face it : till at last
Too strong breaks the o'erwhelming sea : lo, then
They cease, and yield them up as broken men
To fate and the wild waters. Even so
I in my many sorrows bear me low,
Nor curse, nor strive that other things may be.
The great wave rolled from God hath conquered me.

But, O, let Hector and the fates that fell
On Hector, sleep. Weep for him ne'er so well,
Thy weeping shall not wake him. Honour thou
The new lord that is set above thee now,
And make of thine own gentle piety
A prize to lure his heart. So shalt thou be
A strength to them that love us, and—God knows,
It may be—rear this babe among his foes,

My Hector's child, to manhood and great aid
 For Ilion. So her stones may yet be laid
 One on another, if God will, and wrought
 Again to a city ! Ah, how thought to thought
 Still beckons ! . . . But what minion of the Greek
 Is this that cometh, with new words to speak ?

[Enter TALTHYBIUS with a band of Soldiers. *He comes forward slowly and with evident disquiet.*

TALTHYBIUS.

Spouse of the noblest heart that beat in Troy,
 Andromache, hate me not ! 'Tis not in joy
 I tell thee. But the people and the Kings
 Have with one voice . . .

ANDROMACHE.

What is it ? Evil things
 Are on thy lips !

TALTHYBIUS.

'Tis ordered, this child . . . Oh,
 How can I tell her of it ?

ANDROMACHE.

Doth he not go
 With me, to the same master ?

TALTHYBIUS.

There is none
 In Greece, shall e'er be master of thy son.

ANDROMACHE.

How ? Will they leave him here to build again
 The wreck ? . .

TALTHYBIUS.

I know not how to tell thee plain !

ANDROMACHE.

Thou hast a gentle heart . . . if it be ill,
And not good, news thou hidest !

TALTHYBIUS.

'Tis their will

Thy son shall die. . . . The whole vile thing is said
Now !

ANDROMACHE.

Oh, I could have borne mine enemy's bed !

TALTHYBIUS.

And speaking in the council of the host
Odysseus hath prevailed—

ANDROMACHE.

O lost ! lost ! lost ! . . .

Forgive me ! It is not easy . . .

TALTHYBIUS.

. . . That the son

Of one so perilous be not fostered on
To manhood—

ANDROMACHE.

God ; may his own counsel fall
On his own sons !

TALTHYBIUS.

. . . But from this crested wall
 Of Troy be dashed, and die. . . . Nay, let the thing
 Be done. Thou shalt be wiser so. Nor cling
 So fiercely to him. Suffer as a brave
 Woman in bitter pain ; nor think to have
 Strength which thou hast not. Look about thee here !
 Canst thou see help, or refuge anywhere ?
 Thy land is fallen and thy lord, and thou
 A prisoner and alone, one woman ; how
 Canst battle against us ? For thine own good
 I would not have thee strive, nor make ill blood
 And shame about thee. . . . Ah, nor move thy lips
 In silence there, to cast upon the ships
 Thy curse ! One word of evil to the host,
 This babe shall have no burial, but be tossed
 Naked. . . . Ah, peace ! And bear as best thou may,
 War's fortune. So thou shalt not go thy way
 Leaving this child unburied ; nor the Greek
 Be stern against thee, if thy heart be meek !

ANDROMACHE (*to the child*).

Go, die, my best-beloved, my cherished one,
 In fierce men's hands, leaving me here alone.
 Thy father was too valiant ; that is why
 They slay thee ! Other children, like to die,
 Might have been spared for that. But on thy head
 His good is turned to evil.

O thou bed
 And bridal ; O the joining of the hand,
 That led me long ago to Hector's land

To bear, O not a lamb for Grecian swords
To slaughter, but a Prince o'er all the hordes
Enthroned of wide-flung Asia. . . . Weepest thou?
Nay, why, my little one? Thou canst not know.
And Father will not come; he will not come;
Not once, the great spear flashing, and the tomb
Riven to set thee free! Not one of all
His brethren, nor the might of Ilion's wall.

How shall it be? One horrible spring . . . deep,
deep

Down. And thy neck . . . Ah God, so cometh
sleep! . . .

And none to pity thee! . . . Thou little thing
That curlest in my arms, what sweet scents cling
All round thy neck! Belovèd; can it be
All nothing, that this bosom cradled thee
And fostered; all the weary nights, wherethrough
I watched upon thy sickness, till I grew
Wasted with watching? Kiss me. This one time;
Not ever again. Put up thine arms, and climb
About my neck: now, kiss me, lips to lips. . . .

O, ye have found an anguish that outstrips
All tortures of the East, ye gentle Greeks!
Why will ye slay this innocent, that seeks
No wrong? . . . O Helen, Helen, thou ill tree
That Tyndareus planted, who shall deem of thee
As child of Zeus? O, thou hast drawn thy breath
From many fathers, Madness, Hate, red Death,
And every rotting poison of the sky!
Zeus knows thee not, thou vampire, draining dry
Greece and the world! God hate thee and destroy,
That with those beautiful eyes hast blasted Troy,
And made the far-famed plains a waste withal.

Quick ! take him : drag him : cast him from the wall,
 If cast ye will ! Tear him, ye beasts, be swift !
 God hath undone me, and I cannot lift
 One hand, one hand, to save my child from death . . .
 O, hide my head for shame : fling me beneath
 Your galleys' benches ! . . .

[*She swoons: then half-rising.*

Quick : I must begone
 To the bridal. . . . I have lost my child, my own !

[*The Soldiers close round her.*

LEADER.

O Troy ill-starred ; for one strange woman, one
 Abhorred kiss, how are thine hosts undone !

TALTHYBIUS (*bending over ANDROMACHE and gradually taking the Child from her*).

Come, Child : let be that clasp of love
 Outworead ! Walk thy ways with me,
 Up to the crested tower, above
 Thy father's wall . . . where they decree
 Thy soul shall perish.—Hold him : hold !—
 Would God some other man might ply
 These charges, one of duller mould,
 And nearer to the iron than I !

HECUBA.

O Child, they rob us of our own,
 Child of my Mighty One outworn :
 Ours, ours thou art !—Can aught be done
 Of deeds, can aught of pain be borne,

To aid thee?—Lo, this beaten head,
This bleeding bosom! These I spread
As gifts to thee. I can thus much.

Woe, woe for Troy, and woe for thee!
What fall yet lacketh, ere we touch
The last dead deep of misery?

[*The Child, who has started back from TALTHYBIUS, is taken up by one of the Soldiers and borne back towards the city, while ANDROMACHE is set again on the Chariot and driven off towards the ships. TALTHYBIUS goes with the Child.*

CHORUS.

[*Strophe 1.*

In Salamis, filled with the foaming
Of billows and murmur of bees,
Old Telamon stayed from his roaming,
Long ago, on a throne of the seas;
Looking out on the hills olive-laden,
Enchanted, where first from the earth
The grey-gleaming fruit of the Maiden
Athena had birth;
A soft grey crown for a city
Belovèd, a City of Light:
Yet he rested not there, nor had pity,
But went forth in his might,
Where Heracles wandered, the lonely
Bow-bearer, and lent him his hands
For the wrecking of one land only,
Of Ilion, Ilion only,
Most hated of lands!

[*Antistrophe 1.*

Of the bravest of Hellas he made him
 A ship-folk, in wrath for the Steeds,
 And sailed the wide waters, and stayed him
 At last amid Simoës' reeds ;
 And the oars beat slow in the river,
 And the long ropes held in the strand,
 And he felt for his bow and his quiver,
 The wrath of his hand.
 And the old king died ; and the towers
 That Phœbus had builded did fall,
 And his wrath, as a flame that devours,
 Ran red over all ;
 And the fields and the woodlands lay blasted,
 Long ago. Yea, twice hath the Sire
 Uplifted his hand and downcast it
 On the wall of the Dardan, downcast it
 As a sword and as fire.

[*Strophe 2.*

In vain, all in vain,
 O thou 'mid the wine-jars golden
 That movest in delicate joy,
 Ganymêdês, child of Troy,
 The lips of the Highest drain
 The cup in thine hand upholden :
 And thy mother, thy mother that bore thee,
 Is wasted with fire and torn ;
 And the voice of her shores is heard,
 Wild, as the voice of a bird,
 For lovers and children before thee
 Crying, and mothers outworn.
 And the pools of thy bathing are perished,
 And the wind-strewn ways of thy feet :

Yet thy face as aforetime is cherished
 Of Zeus, and the breath of it sweet ;
 Yea, the beauty of Calm is upon it
 In houses at rest and afar.
 But thy land, He hath wrecked and o'erthrown it
 In the wailing of war.

[*Antistrophe 2.*

O Love, ancient Love,
 Of old to the Dardan given ;
 Love of the Lords of the Sky ;
 How didst thou lift us high
 In Ilion, yea, and above
 All cities, as wed with heaven !
 For Zeus—O leave it unspoken :
 But alas for the love of the Morn ;
 Morn of the milk-white wing,
 The gentle, the earth-loving,
 That shineth on battlements broken
 In Troy, and a people forlorn !
 And, lo, in her bowers Tithônus,
 Our brother, yet sleeps as of old :
 O, she too hath loved us and known us,
 And the Steeds of her star, flashing gold,
 Stooped hither and bore him above us ;
 Then blessed we the Gods in our joy.
 But all that made them to love us
 Hath perished from Troy.

[As the song ceases, the King MENELAUS enters,
 richly armed and followed by a bodyguard of
 Soldiers. He is a prey to violent and con-
 flicting emotions.

MENELAUS.

How bright the face of heaven, and how sweet
 The air this day, that layeth at my feet
 The woman that I . . . Nay : 'twas not for her
 I came. 'Twas for the man, the cozener
 And thief, that ate with me and stole away
 My bride. But Paris lieth, this long day,
 By God's grace, under the horse-hoofs of the Greek,
 And round him all his land. And now I seek . . .
 Curse her ! I scarce can speak the name she bears,
 That was my wife. Here with the prisoners
 They keep her, in these huts, among the hordes
 Of numbered slaves.—The host whose labouring swords
 Won her, have given her up to me, to fill
 My pleasure ; perchance kill her, or not kill,
 But lead her home.—Methinks I have foregone
 The slaying of Helen here in Ilion . . .
 Over the long seas I will bear her back,
 And there, there, cast her out to whatso wrack
 Of angry death they may devise, ~~who~~ know
 Their dearest dead for her in Ilion.—Ho !
 Ye soldiers ! Up into the chambers where
 She croucheth ! Grip the long blood-reeking hair,
 And drag her to mine eyes . . . [Controlling himself.
 And when there come
 Fair breezes, my long ships shall bear her home.

[*The Soldiers go to force open the door of the second hut on the left.*

HECUBA.

Thou deep Base of the World, and thou high Throne
 Above the World, whoe'er thou art, unknown

And hard of surmise, Chain of Things that be,
Or Reason of our Reason ; God, to thee
I lift my praise, seeing the silent road
That bringeth justice ere the end be trod
To all that breathes and dies.

MENELAUS (*turning*).

Ha ! who is there
That prayeth heaven, and in so strange a prayer ?

HECUBA.

I bless thee, Menelaus, I bless thee,
If thou wilt slay her ! Only fear to see
Her visage, lest she snare thee and thou fall !
She snareth strong men's eyes ; she snareth tall
Cities ; and fire from out her eateth up
Houses. Such magic hath she, as a cup
Of death ! . . . Do I not know her ? Yea, and thou,
And these that lie around, do they not know ?

[*The Soldiers return from the hut and stand aside
to let HELEN pass between them. She comes
through them, gentle and unafeard : there is
no disorder in her raiment.*]

HELEN.

King Menelaus, thy first deed might make
A woman fear. Into my chamber brake
Thine arm'd men, and lead me wrathfully.

Methinks, almost, I know thou hatest me.
Yet I would ask thee, what decree is gone
Forth for my life or death ?

MENELAUS (*struggling with his emotion*).

There was not one

That scrupled for thee. All, all with one will
Gave thee to me, whom thou hast wronged, to kill !

HELEN.

And is it granted that I speak, or no,
In answer to them ere I die, to show
I die most wronged and innocent ?

MENELAUS.

I seek
To kill thee, woman ; not to hear thee speak !

HECUBA.

O hear her ! She must never die unheard,
King Menelaus ! And give me the word
To speak in answer ! All the wrong she wrought
Away from thee, in Troy, thou knowest not.
The whole tale set together is a death
Too sure ; she shall not 'scape thee !

MENELAUS.

'Tis but breath
And time. For thy sake, Hecuba, if she need
To speak, I grant the prayer. I have no heed
Nor mercy—let her know it well—for her !

HELEN.

It may be that, how false or true soe'er
Thou deem me, I shall win no word from thee.
So sore thou holdest me thine enemy.
Yet I will take what words I think thy heart
Holdeth of anger : and in even part
Set my wrong and thy wrong, and all that fell.

[*Pointing to HECUBA.*

She cometh first, who bare the seed and well
Of springing sorrow, when to life she brought
Paris : and that old King, who quenchèd not
Quick in the spark, ere yet he woke to slay,
The firebrand's image.—But enough : a day
Came, and this Paris judged beneath the trees
Three Crowns of Life, three diverse Goddesses.
The gift of Pallas was of War, to lead
His East in conquering battles, and make bleed
The hearths of Hellas. Hera held a Throne—
If majesties he craved—to reign alone
From Phrygia to the last realm of the West.
And Cypris, if he deemed her loveliest,
Beyond all heaven, made dreams about my face
And for her grace gave me. And, lo ! her grace
Was judged the fairest, and she stood above
Those twain.—Thus was I loved, and thus my
love

Hath holpen Hellas. No fierce Eastern crown
Is o'er your lands, no spear hath cast them down.
O, it was well for Hellas ! But for me
Most ill ; caught up and sold across the sea
For' this my beauty ; yea, dishonourèd
For that which else had been about my head
A crown of honour. . . . Ah, I see thy thought ;
The first plain deed, 'tis that I answer not,
How in the dark out of thy house I fled . . .
There came the Seed of Fire, this woman's seed ;
Came—O, a Goddess great walked with him then—
This Alexander, Breaker-down-of-Men,
This Paris, Strength - is - with - him ; whom thou,
whom—
O false and light of heart—thou in thy room

Didst leave, and spreadest sail for Cretan seas,
Far, far from me ! . . . And yet, how strange it is !
I ask not thee ; I ask my own sad thought,
What was there in my heart, that I forgot
My home and land and all I loved, to fly
With a strange man ? Surely it was not I,
But Cypris, there ! Lay thou thy rod on her,
And be more high than Zeus and bitterer,
Who o'er all other spirits hath his throne,
But knows her chain must bind him. My wrong done
Hath its own pardon. . . .

One word yet thou hast,
Methinks, of righteous seeming. When at last
The earth for Paris oped and all was o'er,
And her strange magic bound my feet no more,
Why kept I still his house, why fled not I
To the Argive ships ? . . . Ah, how I strove to fly !
The old Gate-Warden could have told thee all,
My husband, and the watchers from the wall ;
It was not once they took me, with the rope
Tied, and this body swung in the air, to grope
Its way toward thee, from that dim battlement.

Ah, husband still, how shall thy hand be bent
To slay me ? Nay, if Right be come at last,
What shalt thou bring but comfort for pains past,
And harbour for a woman storm-driven :
A woman borne away by violent men :
And this one birthright of my beauty, this
That might have been my glory, lo, it is
A stamp that God hath burned, of slavery !
Alas ! and if thou cravest still to be
As one set above gods, inviolate,
'Tis but a fruitless longing holds thee yet.

LEADER.

O Queen, think of thy children and thy land,
And break her spell ! The sweet soft speech, the
hand
And heart so fell : it maketh me afraid.

HECUBA.

Meseems her goddesses first cry mine aid
Against these lying lips ! . . . Not Hera, nay,
Nor virgin Pallas deem I such low clay,
To barter their own folk, Argos and brave
Athens, to be trod down, the Phrygian's slave,
All for vain glory and a shepherd's prize
On Ida ! Wherefore should great Hera's eyes
So hunger to be fair ? She doth not use
To seek for other loves, being wed with Zeus.
And maiden Pallas . . . did some strange god's face
Beguile her, that she craved for loveliness,
Who chose from God one virgin gift above
All gifts, and fleéth from the lips of love ?

Ah, deck not out thine own heart's evil springs
By making spirits of heaven as brutish things
And cruel. The wise may hear thee, and guess all !

And Cypris must take ship—fantastical !
Sail with my son and enter at the gate
To seek thee ! Had she willed it, she had sate
At peace in heaven, and wafted thee, and all
Amyclae with thee, under Ilion's wall.

My son was passing beautiful, beyond
His peers ; and thine own heart, that saw and conned
His face, became a spirit enchanting thee.
For all wild things that in mortality

Have being, are Aphroditê ; and the name
She bears in heaven is born and writ of them.

Thou sawest him in gold and orient vest
Shining, and lo, a fire about thy breast
Leapt ! Thou hadst fed upon such little things,
Pacing thy ways in Argos. But now wings
Were come ! Once free from Sparta, and there rolled
The Ilian glory, like broad streams of gold,
To steep thine arms and splash the towers ! How
small,
How cold that day was Menelaus' hall !

Enough of that. It was by force my son
Took thee, thou sayst, and striving. . . . Yet not one
In Sparta knew ! No cry, no sudden prayer
Rang from thy rooms that night. . . . Castor was there
To hear thee, and his brother : both true men,
Not yet among the stars ! And after, when
Thou camest here to Troy, and in thy track
Argos and all its anguish and the rack
Of war—Ah God !—perchance men told thee ‘ Now
The Greek prevails in battle ’ : then wouldest thou
Praise Menelaus, that my son might smart,
Striving with that old image in a heart
Uncertain still. Then Troy had victories :
And this Greek was as naught ! Alway thine eyes
Watched Fortune’s eyes, to follow hot where she
Led first. Thou wouldest not follow Honesty.

Thy secret ropes, thy body swung to fall
Far, like a desperate prisoner, from the wall !
Who found thee so ? When wast thou taken ? Nay,
Hadst thou no surer rope, no sudden way
Of the sword, that any woman honest-souled
Had sought long since, loving her lord of old ?

Often and often did I charge thee ; ‘ Go,
My daughter ; go thy ways. My sons will know
New loves. I will give aid, and steal thee past
The Argive watch. O give us peace at last,
Us and our foes ! ’ But out thy spirit cried
As at a bitter word. Thou hadst thy pride
In Alexander’s house, and O, ’twas sweet
To hold proud Easterns bowing at thy feet.
They were great things to thee ! . . . And comest
thou now

Forth, and hast decked thy bosom and thy brow,
And breathest with thy lord the same blue air,
Thou evil heart ? Low, low, with ravaged hair,
Rent raiment, and flesh shuddering, and within—
O shame at last, not glory for thy sin ;
So face him if thou canst ! . . . Lo, I have done.
Be true, O King ; let Hellas bear her crown
Of Justice. Slay this woman, and upraise
The law for evermore : she that betrays
Her husband’s bed, let her be judged and die.

LEADER.

Be strong, O King ; give judgment worthily
For thee and thy great house. Shake off thy long
Reproach ; not weak, but iron against the wrong !

MENELAUS.

Thy thought doth walk with mine in one intent.
. ’Tis sure ; her heart was willing, when she went
Forth to a stranger’s bed. And all her fair
Tale of enchantment, ’tis a thing of air ! . . .

[Turning furiously upon HELEN.]

Out, woman ! There be those that seek thee yet
 With stones ! Go, meet them. So shall thy long
 debt

Be paid at last. And ere this night is o'er
 Thy dead face shall dishonour me no more !

HELEN (kneeling before him and embracing him).

Behold, mine arms are wreathed about thy knees ;
 Lay not upon my head the phantasies
 Of Heaven. Remember all, and slay me not !

HECUBA.

Remember them she murdered, them that fought
 Beside thee, and their children ! Hear that prayer !

MENELAUS.

Peace, aged woman, peace ! 'Tis not for her ;
 She is as naught to me.

(*To the Soldiers*) . . . March on before,
 Ye ministers, and tend her to the shore . . .
 And have some chambered galley set for her,
 Where she may sail the seas.

HECUBA.

If thou be there,
 I charge thee, let not her set foot therein !

MENELAUS.

How ? Shall the ship go heavier for her sin ?

HECUBA.

A lover once, will alway love again.

MENELAUS.

If that he loved be evil, he will fain
 Hate it ! . . . Howbeit, thy pleasure shall be done.
 Some other ship shall bear her, not mine own. . . .
 Thou counsellest very well . . . And when we come
 To Argos, then . . . O then some pitiless doom
 Well-earned, black as her heart ! One that shall bind
 Once for all time the law on womankind
 Of faithfulness ! . . . 'Twill be no easy thing,
 God knoweth. But the thought thereof shall fling
 A chill on the dreams of women, though they be
 Wilder of wing and loathèd more than she !

[Exit, following HELEN, who is escorted by the
 Soldiers.]

CHORUS.

Some Women.

[*Strophe 1.*

And hast thou turned from the Altar of frankin-
 cense,

And given to the Greek thy temple of Ilion ?

The flame of the cakes of corn, is it gone from
 hence,

The myrrh on the air and the wreathed towers
 gone ?

And Ida, dark Ida, where the wild ivy grows,
 The glens that run as rivers from the summer-broken
 snows,

And the Rock, is it forgotten, where the first sunbeam
 glows,

The lit house most holy of the Dawn ?

Others.

[*Antistrophe 1.*

The sacrifice is gone and the sound of joy,
The dancing under the stars and the night-long
prayer :

The Golden Images and the Moons of Troy,
The Twelve Moons and the mighty names they
bear :

My heart, my heart crieth, O Lord Zeus on high,
Were they all to thee as nothing, thou thronèd in the
sky,

Thronèd in the fire-cloud, where a City, near to die,
Passeth in the wind and the flare ?

A Woman.

[*Strophe 2.*

Dear one, O husband mine,
Thou in the dim dominions
Driftest with waterless lips,
Unburied ; and me the ships
Shall bear o'er the bitter brine,
Storm-birds upon angry pinions,
Where the towers of the Giants shine
O'er Argos cloudily,
And the riders ride by the sea.

Others.

And children still in the Gate
Crowd and cry,
A multitude desolate,
Voices that float and wait
As the tears run dry :

' Mother, alone on the shore
They drive me, far from thee :
Lo, the dip of the oar,
The black hull on the sea !
Is it the Isle Immortal,
Salamis, waits for me ?
Is it the Rock that broods
Over the sundered floods
Of Corinth, the ancient portal
Of Pelops' sovranity ?'

A Woman.

[*Antistrophe 2.*

Out in the waste of foam,
Where rideth dark Menelaus,
Come to us there, O white
And jagged, with wild sea-light
And crashing of oar-blades, come,
O thunder of God, and slay us :
While our tears are wet for home,
While out in the storm go we,
Slaves of our enemy !

Others.

And, God, may Helen be there,
With mirror of gold,
Decking her face so fair,
Girl-like ; and hear, and stare,
And turn death-cold :
Never, ah, never more
The hearth of her home to see,
Nor sand of the Spartan shore,
Nor tombs where her fathers be,

Nor Athena's bronzen Dwelling,
 Nor the towers of Pitane ;
 For her face was a dark desire
 Upon Greece, and shame like fire,
 And her dead are welling, welling,
 From red Simoës to the sea !

[TALTHYBIUS, followed by one or two Soldiers
 and bearing the child ASTYANAX dead, is
 seen approaching.

LEADER.

Ah, change on change ! Yet each one racks
 This land with evil manifold ;
 Unhappy wives of Troy, behold,
 They bear the dead Astyanax,
 Our prince, whom bitter Greeks this hour
 Have hurled to death from Ilion's tower.

TALTHYBIUS.

One galley, Hecuba, there lingereth yet,
 Lapping the wave, to gather the last freight
 Of Pyrrhus' spoils for Thessaly. The chief
 Himself long since hath parted, much in grief
 For Pêleus' sake, his grandsire, whom, men say,
 Acastus, Pelias' son, in war array.
 Hath driven to exile. Loath enough before
 Was he to linger, and now goes the more
 In haste, bearing Andromache, his prize.
 'Tis she hath charmed these tears into mine eyes,
 Weeping her fatherland, as o'er the wave
 She gazed, and speaking words to Hector's grave.

Howbeit, she prayed us that due rites be done
For burial of this babe, thine Hector's son,
That now from Ilion's tower is fallen and dead.
And, lo ! this great bronze-fronted shield, the dread
Of many a Greek, that Hector held in fray,
O never in God's name—so did she pray—
Be this borne forth to hang in Pêleus' hall
Or that dark bridal chamber, that the wall
May hurt her eyes ; but here, in Troy o'erthrown,
Instead of cedar wood and vaulted stone,
Be this her child's last house. . . . And in thine hands
She bade me lay him, to be swathed in bands
Of death and garments, such as rest to thee
In these thy fallen fortunes ; seeing that she
Hath gone her ways, and, for her master's haste,
May no more fold the babe unto his rest.

Howbeit, so soon as he is garlanded
And robed, we will heap earth above his head
And lift our sails. . . . See all be swiftly done,
As thou art bidden. I have saved thee one
Labour. For as I passed Scamander's stream
Hard by, I let the waters run on him,
And cleansed his wounds.—See, I will go forth now
And break the hard earth for his grave : so thou
And I will haste together, to set free
Our oars at last to beat the homeward sea !

[*He goes out with his Soldiers, leaving the body of
the Child in HECUBA's arms.*

HECUBA.

Set the great orb of Hector's shield to lie
Here on the ground. 'Tis bitter that mine eye

Should see it. . . . O ye Argives, was your spear
Keen, and your hearts so low and cold, to fear
This babe? 'Twas a strange murder for brave
men!

For fear this babe some day might raise again
His fallen land! Had ye so little pride?
While Hector fought, and thousands at his side,
Ye smote us, and we perished; and now, now,
When all are dead and Ilion lieth low,
Ye dread this innocent! I deem it not
Wisdom, that rage of fear that hath no thought. . . .

Ah, what a death hath found thee, little one!
Hadst thou but fallen fighting, hadst thou known
Strong youth and love and all the majesty
Of godlike kings, then had we spoken of thee
As of one blessed . . . could in any wise
These days know blessedness. But now thine eyes
Have seen, thy lips have tasted, but thy soul
No knowledge had nor usage of the whole
Rich life that lapt thee round. . . . Poor little child!
Was it our ancient wall, the circuit piled
By loving Gods, so savagely hath rent
Thy curls, these little flowers innocent
That were thy mother's garden, where she laid
Her kisses; here, just where the bone-edge frayed
Grins white above—Ah heaven, I will not see!

Ye tender arms, the same dear mould have ye
As his; how from the shoulder loose ye drop
And weak! And dear proud lips, so full of hope
And closed for ever! What false words ye said
At daybreak, when he crept into my bed,
Called me kind names, and promised: 'Grandmother,
When thou art dead, I will cut close my hair,

And lead out all the captains to ride by
Thy tomb.' Why didst thou cheat me so? 'Tis I,
Old, homeless, childless, that for thee must shed
Cold tears, so young, so miserably dead.

Dear God, the pattering welcomes of thy feet,
The nursing in my lap; and O, the sweet
Falling asleep together! All is gone.
How should a poet carve the funeral stone
To tell thy story true? 'There lieth here
A babe whom the Greeks feared, and in their fear
Slew him.' Aye, Greece will bless the tale it
tells!

Child, they have left thee beggared of all else
In Hector's house; but one thing shalt thou keep,
This war-shield bronzen-barred, wherein to sleep.
Alas, thou guardian true of Hector's fair
Left arm, how art thou masterless! And there
I see his handgrip printed on thy hold;
And deep stains of the precious sweat, that rolled
In battle from the brows and beard of him,
Drop after drop, are writ about thy rim.

Go, bring them—such poor garments hazardous
As these days leave. God hath not granted us
Wherewith to make much pride. But all I can,
I give thee, Child of Troy.—O vain is man,
Who glorieth in his joy and hath no fears:
While to and fro the chances of the years
Dance like an idiot in the wind! And none
By any strength hath his own fortune won.

[*During these lines several Women are seen approaching with garlands and raiment in their hands.*

LEADER.

Lo these, who bear thee raiment harvested
From Ilion's slain, to fold upon the dead.

[During the following scene HECUBA gradually takes the garments and wraps them about the Child.]

HECUBA.

O not in pride for speeding of the car
Beyond thy peers, not for the shaft of war
True aimed, as Phrygians use ; not any prize
Of joy for thee, nor splendour in men's eyes,
Thy father's mother lays these offerings
About thee, from the many fragrant things
That were all thine of old. But now no more.
One woman, loathed of God, hath broke the door
And robbed thy treasure-house, and thy warm breath
Made cold, and trod thy people down to death !

CHORUS.

Some Women.

Deep in the heart of me
I feel thine hand,
Mother : and is it he
Dead here, our prince to be,
And lord of the land ?

HECUBA.

Glory of Phrygian raiment, which my thought
Kept for thy bridal day with some far-sought
Queen of the East, folds thee for evermore.

And thou, grey Mother, Mother-Shield that bore

A thousand days of glory, thy last crown
Is here. . . . Dear Hector's shield ! Thou shalt lie
down

Undying with the dead, and lordlier there
Than all the gold Odysseus' breast can bear,
The evil and the strong !

CHORUS.

Some Women.

Child of the Shield-bearer,
Alas, Hector's child !
Great Earth, the All-mother,
Taketh thee unto her
With wailing wild !

Others.

Mother of misery,
Give Death his song !

(HEC. Woe !) Aye and bitterly

(HEC. Woe !) We too weep for thee,

And the infinite wrong !

[During these lines HECUBA, kneeling by the body,
has been performing a funeral rite, symboli-
cally staunching the dead Child's wounds.

HECUBA.

I make thee whole ;
I bind thy wounds, O little vanished soul.
This wound and this I heal with linen white :
O emptiness of aid ! . . . Yet let the rite
Be spoken. This and . . . Nay, not I, but he,
Thy father far away shall comfort thee !

[She bows her head to the ground and remains
motionless and unseeing.

CHORUS.

Beat, beat thine head :
 Beat with the wailing chime
 Of hands lifted in time :
 Beat and bleed for the dead.
 Woe is me for the dead !

HECUBA.

O Women ! Ye, mine own . . .

[*She rises bewildered, as though she had seen a vision.*

LEADER.

Hecuba, speak !

Thine are we all. Oh, ere thy bosom break . . .

HECUBA.

Lo, I have seen the open hand of God ;
 And in it nothing, nothing, save the rod
 Of mine affliction, and the eternal hate,
 Beyond all lands, chosen and lifted great
 For Troy ! Vain, vain were prayer and incense-swell
 And bulls' blood on the altars ! . . . All is well.
 Had He not turned us in His hand, and thrust
 Our high things low and shook our hills as dust,
 We had not been this splendour, and our wrong
 An everlasting music for the song
 Of earth and heaven !

Go, women : lay our dead
 In his low sepulchre.. He hath his meed
 Of robing. And, methinks, but little care
 Toucheth the tomb, if they that moulder there

Have rich encerément. 'Tis we, 'tis we,
That dream, we living and our vanity !

[*The Women bear out the dead Child upon the shield, singing, when presently flames of fire and dim forms are seen among the ruins of the City.*]

CHORUS.

Some Women.

Woe for the mother that bare thee, child,
Thread so frail of a hope so high,
That Time hath broken : and all men smiled
About thy cradle, and, passing by,
Spoke of thy father's majesty.
Low, low, thou liest !

Others.

Ha ! Who be these on the crested rock ?
Fiery hands in the dusk, and a shock
Of torches flung ! What lingereth still
O wounded City, of unknown ill,
Ere yet thou diest ?

TALTHYBIUS (*coming out through the ruined Wall*).

Ye Captains that have charge to wreck this keep
Of Priam's City, let your torches sleep
No more ! Up, fling the fire into her heart !
Then have we done with Ilion, and may part
In joy to Hellas from this evil land.
And ye—so hath one word two faces—stand,

Daughters of Troy, till on your ruined wall
 The echo of my master's trumpet call
 In signal breaks : then, forward to the sea,
 Where the long ships lie waiting.

And for thee,

O ancient woman most unfortunate,
 Follow : Odysseus' men be here, and wait
 To guide thee. . . . 'Tis to him thou go'st for thrall.

HECUBA.

Ah, me ! and is it come, the end of all,
 The very crest and summit of my days ?
 I go forth from my land, and all its ways
 Are filled with fire ! Bear me, O aged feet,
 A little nearer : I must gaze, and greet
 My poor town ere she fall.

Farewell, farewell !

O thou whose breath was mighty on the swell
 Of orient winds, my Troy ! Even thy name
 Shall soon be taken from thee. Lo, the flame
 Hath thee, and we, thy children, pass away
 To slavery . . . God ! O God of mercy ! . . . Nay :
 Why call I on the Gods ? They know, they know,
 My prayers, and would not hear them long ago.

Quick, to the flames ! O, in thine agony,
 My Troy, mine own, take me to die with thee !

[She springs toward the flames, but is seized and held by the Soldiers.]

TALTHYBIUS.

Back ! Thou art drunken with thy miseries,
 Poor woman !—Hold her fast, men, till it please

Odysseus that she come. She was his lot
Chosen from all and portioned. Lose her not !

[*He goes to watch over the burning of the City.*
The dusk deepens.

CHORUS.

Divers Women.

Woe, woe, woe !

Thou of the Ages, O wherefore fleëst thou,
Lord of the Phrygian, Father that made us ?
'Tis we, thy children ; shall no man aid us ?
'Tis we, thy children ! Seëst thou, seëst thou ?

Others.

He seëth, only his heart is pitiless ;
And the land dies : yea, she,
She of the Mighty Cities perisheth citiless !
Troy shall no more be !

Others.

Woe, woe, woe !
Ilion shineth afar !
Fire in the deeps thereof,
Fire in the heights above,
And crested walls of War !

Others.

As smoke on the wing of heaven
Climbeth and scattereth,
Torn of the spear and driven,
The land crieth for death :
O stormy battlements that red fire hath riven,
And the sword's angry breath !
[*A new thought comes to HECUBA ; she kneels and beats the earth with her hands.*

HECUBA.

[*Strophe.*

O Earth, Earth of my children ; hearken ! and O
mine own,
Ye have hearts and forget not, ye in the darkness
lying !

LEADER.

Now hast thou found thy prayer, crying to them that
are gone.

HECUBA.

Surely my knees are weary, but I kneel above your
head ;

Hearken, O ye so silent ! My hands beat your bed !

LEADER.

I, I am near thee ;

I kneel to thy dead to hear thee,

Kneel to mine own in the darkness ; O husband, hear
my crying !

HECUBA.

Even as the beasts they drive, even as the loads they
bear,

LEADER.

(Pain ; O pain !)

HECUBA.

We go to the house of bondage. Hear, ye dead, O hear !

LEADER.

(Go, and come not again !)

HECUBA.

Priam, mine own Priam,
Lying so lowly,
Thou in thy nothingness,
Shelterless, comfortless,
See'st thou the thing I am ?
Know'st thou my bitter stress ?

LEADER.

Nay, thou art naught to him !
Out of the strife there came,
Out of the noise and shame,
Making his eyelids dim,
Death, the Most Holy !
[The fire and smoke rise constantly higher.]

HECUBA.

[Antistrophe.]

O high houses of Gods, beloved streets of my birth,
Ye have found the way of the sword, the fiery and
blood-red river !

LEADER.

Fall, and men shall forget you ! Ye shall lie in the
gentle earth.

HECUBA.

The dust as smoke riseth ; it spreadeth wide its wing ;
It maketh me as a shadow, and my City a vanished
thing !

LEADER.

Out on the smoke she goeth,
 And her name no man knoweth ;
 And the cloud is northward, southward ; Troy is
 gone for ever !

*[A great crash is heard, and the Wall is lost in
 smoke and darkness.]*

HECUBA.

Ha ! Marked ye ? Heard ye ? The crash of the
 towers that fall !

LEADER.

All is gone !

HECUBA.

Wrath in the earth and quaking and a flood that
 sweepeth all,

LEADER.

And passeth on !

[The Greek trumpet sounds.]

HECUBA.

Farewell !—O spirit grey,
 Whatso is coming,
 Fail not from under me.
 Weak limbs, why tremble ye ?
 Forth where the new long day
 Dawneth to slavery !

CHORUS.

Farewell from parting lips,
Farewell!—Come, I and thou,
Whatso may wait us now,
Forth to the long Greek ships
And the sea's foaming.

[*The trumpet sounds again, and the Women go out in the darkness.*

THE BACCHAE

BAKIS

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

DIONYSUS, THE GOD ; son of Zeus and of the Theban princess
Semele.

CADMUS, formerly King of Thebes, father of *Semele*.

PENTHEUS, King of Thebes, grandson of Cadmus.

AGÂVÈ, daughter of Cadmus, mother of Pentheus.

TEIRESIAS, an aged Theban prophet.

A SOLDIER OF PENTHEUS' GUARD.

TWO MESSENGERS.

A CHORUS OF INSPIRED DAMSELS, following Dionysus
from the East.

"The play was first produced after the death of Euripides by his
son, who bore the same name, together with the 'Iphigenia in Aulis'
and the 'Alcmaeon,' probably in the year 405 B.C."



THE BACCHAE

The background represents the front of the Castle of PENTHEUS, King of Thebes. At one side is visible the sacred Tomb of Semelê, a little enclosure overgrown with wild vines, with a cleft in the rocky floor of it from which there issues at times steam or smoke. The God DIONYSUS is discovered alone.

DIONYSUS.

Behold, God's Son is come unto this land
Of Thebes, even I, Dionysus, whom the brand
Of heaven's hot splendour lit to life, when she
Who bore me, Cadmus' daughter Semelê,
Died here. So, changed in shape from God to
man,

I walk again by Dirce's streams and scan

Ismenus' shore. There by the castle side
 I see her place, the Tomb of the Lightning's Bride,
 The wreck of smouldering chambers, and the great
 Faint wreaths of fire undying—as the hate
 Dies not, that Hera held for Semelê.

Aye, Cadmus hath done well ; in purity
 He keeps this place apart, inviolate,
 His daughter's sanctuary ; and I have set
 My green and clustered vines to robe it round.

Far now behind me lies the golden ground
 Of Lydian and of Phrygian ; far away
 The wide hot plains where Persian sunbeams play,
 The Bactrian war-holds, and the storm-oppressed
 Clime of the Mede, and Araby the Blest,
 And Asia all, that by the salt sea lies
 In proud embattled cities, motley-wise
 Of Hellene and Barbarian interwrought ;
 And now I come to Hellas—having taught
 All the world else my dances and my rite
 Of mysteries, to show me in men's sight
 Manifest God.

And first of Hellene lands
 I cry this Thebes to waken ; set her hands
 To clasp my wand, mine ivied javelin,
 And round her shoulders hang my wild fawn-skin.
 For they have scorned me whom it least beseemed,
 Semelê's sisters ; mocked my birth, nor deemed
 That Dionysus sprang from Dian seed.

✓ My mother sinned, said they ; and in her need,
 With Cadmus plotting, cloaked her human shame
 With the dread name of Zeus ; for that the flame
 From heaven consumed her, seeing she lied to God.
 Thus must they vaunt ; and therefore hath my rod

On them first fallen, and stung them forth wild-eyed
From empty chambers ; the bare mountain side
Is made their home, and all their hearts are flame.
Yea, I have bound upon the necks of them
The harness of my rites. And with them all
The seed of womankind from hut and hall
Of Thebes, hath this my magic goaded out.
And there, with the old King's daughters, in a rout
Confused, they make their dwelling-place between
The roofless rocks and shadowy pine trees green.
Thus shall this Thebes, how sore soe'er it smart,
Learn and forget not, till she crave her part
In mine adoring ; thus must I speak clear
To save my mother's fame, and crown me here
As true God, born by Semelê to Zeus.

Now Cadmus yieldeth up his throne and use
Of royal honour to his daughter's son
Pentheus ; who on my body hath begun
A war with God. He thrusteth me away
From due drink-offering, and, when men pray,
My name entreats not. Therefore on his own
Head and his people's shall my power be shown.
Then to another land, when all things here
Are well, must I fare onward, making clear
My godhead's might. But should this Theban town
Essay with wrath and battle to drag down
My maids, lo, in their path myself shall be,
And maniac armies battled after me !
For this I veil my godhead with the wan
Form of the things that die, and walk as Man.

O Brood of Tmolus o'er the wide world flown,
O Lydian band, my chosen and mine own,

Damsels uplifted o'er the orient deep
 To wander where I wander, and to sleep
 Where I sleep ; up, and wake the old sweet sound,
 The clang that I and mystic Rhea found,
 The Timbrel of the Mountain ! Gather all
 Thebes to your song round Pentheus' royal hall.
 I seek my new-made worshippers, to guide
 Their dances up Kithaeron's pine-clad side.

*[As he departs, there comes stealing in from the left
 a band of fifteen Eastern Women, the light
 of the sunrise streaming upon their long white
 robes and ivy-bound hair. They wear fawn-
 skins over the robes, and carry some of them
 timbrels, some pipes and other instruments.
 Many bear the thyrsus, or sacred Wand,
 made of reed ringed with ivy. They enter
 stealthily till they see that the place is empty,
 and then begin their mystic song of worship.]*

CHORUS.

A Maiden.

From Asia, from the dayspring that uprises,
 To Bromios ever glorying we came.
 We laboured for our Lord in many guises ;
 We toiled, but the toil is as the prize is ;
 Thou Mystery, we hail thee by thy name !

Another.

Who lingers in the road ? Who espies us ?
 He shall hide him in his house nor be bold.
 Let the heart keep silence that defies us ;
 For I sing this day to Dionysus
 The song that is appointed from of old.

All the Maidens.

Oh, blessed he in all wise,
 Who hath drunk the Living Fountain,
 Whose life no folly staineth,
 And his soul is near to God ;
 Whose sins are lifted, pall-wise,
 As he worships on the Mountain,
 And where Cybele ordaineth,
 Our Mother, he has trod :

His head with ivy laden
 And his thyrsus tossing high,
 For our God he lifts his cry ;
 “Up, O Bacchae, wife and maiden,
 Come, O ye Bacchae, come ; }
 Oh, bring the Joy-bestower,
 God-seed of God the Sower,
 Bring Bromios in his power
 From Phrygia’s mountain dome ;
 To street and town and tower,
 Oh, bring ye Bromios home ! ”

Whom erst in anguish lying
 For an unborn life’s desire,
 As a dead thing in the Thunder
 His mother cast to earth ;
 For her heart was dying, dying,
 In the white heart of the fire ;
 Till Zeus, the Lord of Wonder,
 Devised new lairs of birth ;
 Yea, his own flesh tore to hide him,
 And with clasps of bitter gold
 Did a secret son enfold,

And the Queen knew not beside him ;
 Till the perfect hour was there ;
 Then a horned God was found,
 And a God with serpents crowned ;
 And for that are serpents wound
 In the wands his maidens bear,
 And the songs of serpents sound
 In the mazes of their hair.

Some Maidens.

All hail, O Thebes, thou nurse of Semelê !
 With Semelê's wild ivy crown thy towers ;
 Oh, burst in bloom of wreathing bryony,
 Berries and leaves and flowers ;
 Uplift the dark divine wand,
 The oak-wand and the pine-wand,
 And don thy fawn-skin, fringed in purity
 With fleecy white, like ours.

Oh, cleanse thee in the wands' waving pride !
 Yea, all men shall dance with us and pray,
 When Bromios his companies shall guide
 Hillward, ever hillward, where they stay,
 The flock of the Believing,
 The maids from loom and weaving
 By the magic of his breath borne away.

Others.

Hail thou, O Nurse of Zeus, O Caverned Haunt
 Where fierce arms clanged to guard God's
 cradle rare,
 For thee of old some crested Corybant
 First woke in Cretan air

The wild orb of our orgies,
 Our Timbrel ; and thy gorges
 Rang with this strain ; and blended Phrygian chant
 And sweet keen pipes were there.

But the Timbrel, the Timbrel was another's,
 And away to Mother Rhea it must wend ;
 And to our holy singing from the Mother's
 The mad Satyrs carried it, to blend
 In the dancing and the cheer
 Of our third and perfect Year ;
 And it serves Dionysus in the end !

A Maiden.

O glad, glad on the mountains
 To swoon in the race outworn,
 When the holy fawn-skin clings,
 And all else sweeps away,
 To the joy of the red quick fountains,
 The blood of the hill-goat torn,
 The glory of wild-beast ravenings,
 Where the hill-tops catch the day ;
 To the Phrygian, Lydian, mountains !
 'Tis Bromios leads the way.

Another Maiden.

Then streams the earth with milk, yea, streams
 With wine and nectar of the bee,
 And through the air dim perfume steams
 Of Syrian frankincense ; and He,
 Our leader, from his thyrsus spray
 A torchlight tosses high and higher,
 A torchlight like a beacon-fire,
 To waken all that faint and stray ;

And sets them leaping as he sings,
 His tresses rippling to the sky,
 And deep beneath the Maenad cry
 ✓ His proud voice rings :
 "Come, O ye Bacchae, come !"

All the Maidens.

Hither, O fragrant of Tmolus the Golden,
 Come with the voice of timbrel and drum ;
 Let the cry of your joyance uplift and embolden
 The God of the joy-cry ; O Bacchanals, come !
 With pealing of pipes and with Phrygian clamour,
 On, where the vision of holiness thrills,
 And the music climbs and the maddening glamour,
 With the wild White Maids, to the hills, to the
 hills !
 Oh, then, like a colt as he runs by a river,
 A colt by his dam, when the heart of him sings,
 With the keen limbs drawn and the fleet foot
 a-quiver,
 Away the Bacchanal springs !

Enter TEIRESIAS. He is an old man and blind, leaning upon a staff and moving with slow stateliness, though wearing the Ivy and the Bacchic fawn-skin.

TEIRESIAS.

Ho, there, who keeps the gate ?—Go, summon me
 Cadmus, Agenor's son, who crossed the sea
 From Sidon and upreared this Theban hold.
 Go, whosoe'er thou art. See he be told
 Teiresias seeketh him. Himself will gauge
 Mine errand, and the compact, age with age,

I vowed with him, grey hair with snow-white hair,
To deck the new God's thyrsus, and to wear
His fawn-skin, and with ivy crown our brows.

Enter CADMUS from the Castle. He is even older than TEIRESIAS, and wears the same attire.

CADMUS.

True friend ! I knew that voice of thine, that flows
Like mellow wisdom from a fountain wise.
And, lo, I come prepared, in all the guise
And harness of this God. Are we not told
His is the soul of that dead life of old
That sprang from mine own daughter ? Surely then
Must thou and I with all the strength of men
Exalt him.

Where then shall I stand, where tread
The dance and toss this bowed and hoary head ?
O friend, in thee is wisdom ; guide my grey
And eld-worn steps, eld-worn Teiresias.—Nay ;
I am not weak.

[At the first movement of worship his manner
begins to change ; a mysterious strength and
exaltation enter into him.

Surely this arm could smite
The wild earth with its thyrsus, day and night,
And faint not ! Sweetly and forgetfully
The dim years fall from off me !

TEIRESIAS.

As with thee,
With me 'tis likewise. Light am I and young, ✓
And will essay the dancing and the song.

CADMUS.

Quick, then, our chariots to the mountain road.

TEIRESIAS.

Nay ; to take steeds were to mistrust the God.

CADMUS.

So be it. Mine old arm shall guide thee there.

TEIRESIAS.

The God himself shall guide ! Have thou no care.

CADMUS.

And in all Thebes shall no man dance but we ?

TEIRESIAS.

✓ Aye, Thebes is blinded. Thou and I can see.

CADMUS.

'Tis weary waiting ; hold my hand, friend ; so.

TEIRESIAS.

Lo, there is mine. So linked let us go.

CADMUS.

Shall things of dust the Gods' dark ways despise ?

TEIRESIAS.

Or prove our wit on Heaven's high mysteries ?
 Not thou and I ! That heritage sublime
 Our sires have left us, wisdom old as time,
 No word of man, how deep soe'er his thought
 And won of subtlest toil, may bring to naught.

Aye, men will rail that I forget my years,
 To dance and wreath with ivy these white hairs ;
 What recks it ? Seeing the God no line hath told
 To mark what man shall dance, or young or old ;
 But craves his honours from mortality
 All, no man marked apart ; and great shall be !

CADMUS (*after looking away toward the Mountain*).

Teiresias, since this light thou canst not read,
 I must be seer for thee. Here comes in speed
 Pentheus, Echion's son, whom I have raised
 To rule my people in my stead.—Amazed
 He seems. Stand close, and mark what we shall hear.

[The two stand back, partially concealed, while there enters in hot haste PENTHEUS, followed by a bodyguard. He is speaking to the SOLDIER in command.]

PENTHEUS.

Scarce had I crossed our borders, when mine ear
 Was caught by this strange rumour, that our own
 Wives, our own sisters, from their hearths are flown
 To wild and secret rites ; and cluster there
 High on the shadowy hills, with dance and prayer
 To adore this new-made God, this Dionyse,
 Whate'er he be !—And in their companies
 Deep wine-jars stand, and ever and anon
 Away into the loneliness now one
 Steals forth, and now a second, maid or dame,
 Where love lies waiting, not of God ! The flame,
 They say, of Bacchios wraps them. Bacchios ! Nay,
 'Tis more to Aphrodite that they pray.

Howbeit, all that I have found, my men
 Hold bound and shackled in our dungeon den ;
 The rest, I will go hunt them ! Aye, and snare
 My birds with nets of iron, to quell their prayer
 And mountain song and rites of rascaldom !

They tell me, too, there is a stranger come,
 A man of charm and spell, from Lydian seas,
 A head all gold and cloudy fragrances,
 A wine-red cheek, and eyes that hold the light
 Of the very Cyprian. Day and livelong night
 He haunts amid the damsels, o'er each lip
 Dangling his cup of joyance !—Let me grip
 Him once, but once, within these walls, right
 swift

That wand shall cease its music, and that drift
 Of tossing curls lie still—when my rude sword
 Falls between neck and trunk ! 'Tis all his word,
 This tale of Dionysus ; how that same
 Babe that was blasted by the lightning flame
 With his dead mother, for that mother's lie,
 Was re-conceived, born perfect from the thigh
 Of Zeus, and now is God ! What call ye these ?
 Dreams ? Gibes of the unknown wanderer ? Blas-
 phemies

That crave the very gibbet ?

Stay ! God wot,
 Here is another marvel ! See I not
 In motley fawn-skins robed the vision-seer
 Teiresias ? And my mother's father here—
 O depth of scorn !—adoring with the wand
 Of Bacchios ?—Father !—Nay, mine eyes are fond ;
 It is not your white heads so fancy-flown !
 It cannot be ! Cast off that ivy crown,

O mine own mother's sire ! Set free that hand
That cowers about its staff.

'Tis thou hast planned
This work, Teiresias ! 'Tis thou must set
Another altar and another yet
Amongst us, watch new birds, and win more hire
Of gold, interpreting new signs of fire !
But for thy silver hairs, I tell thee true,
Thou now wert sitting chained amid thy crew
Of raving damsels, for this evil dream
Thou hast brought us, of new Gods ! When once
the gleam
Of grapes hath lit a Woman's Festival,
In all their prayers is no more health at all !

LEADER OF THE CHORUS
(*the words are not heard by PENTHEUS*).

Injurious King, hast thou no care for God,
Nor Cadmus, sower of the Giants' Sod,
Life-spring to great Echion and to thee ?

TEIRESIAS.

Good words, my son, come easily, when he
That speaks is wise, and speaks but for the right.
Else come they never ! Swift are thine, and bright
As though with thought, yet have no thought at all.

Lo, this new God, whom thou dost flout withal,
I cannot speak the greatness wherewith He
In Hellas shall be great ! Two spirits there be,
Young Prince, that in man's world are first of worth.
Dêmêtêr one is named ; she is the Earth—
Call her which name thou will !—who feeds man's frame
With sustenance of things dry. And that which came

Her work to perfect, second, is the Power
From Semelē born. He found the liquid shower
Hid in the grape. He rests man's spirit dim
From grieving, when the vine exalteth him.
He giveth sleep to sink the fretful day
In cool forgetting. Is there any way
With man's sore heart, save only to forget?

Yea, being God, the blood of him is set
Before the Gods in sacrifice, that we
For his sake may be blest.—And so, to thee,
That fable shames him, how this God was knit
Into God's flesh? Nay, learn the truth of it,
Cleared from the false.—When from that deadly
light

Zeus saved the babe, and up to Olympus' height
Raised him, and Hera's wrath would cast him thence,
Then Zeus devised him a divine defence.
A fragment of the world-encircling fire
He rent apart, and wrought to his desire
Of shape and hue, in the image of the child,
And gave to Hera's rage. And so, beguiled
By change and passing time, this tale was born,
How the babe-god was hidden in the torn
Flesh of his sire. He hath no shame thereby.

A prophet is he likewise. Prophecy
Cleaves to all frenzy, but beyond all else
To frenzy of prayer. Then in us verily dwells
The God himself, and speaks the thing to be.
Yea, and of Ares' realm a part hath he.
When mortal armies, mailed and arrayed,
Have in strange fear, or ever blade met blade,
Fled maddened, 'tis this God hath palsied them.
Aye, over Delphi's rock-built diadem

Thou yet shalt see him leaping with his train
 Of fire across the twin-peaked mountain-plain,
 Flaming the darkness with his mystic wand,
 And great in Hellas.—List and understand,
 King Pentheus ! Dream not thou that force is power ;
 Nor, if thou hast a thought, and that thought sour
 And sick, oh, dream not thought is wisdom !—Up,
 Receive this God to Thebes ; pour forth the cup
 Of sacrifice, and pray, and wreath thy brow.

Thou fearest for the damsels ? Think thee now ; ✓
 How toucheth this the part of Dionyse
 To hold maids pure perforce ? In them it lies,
 And their own hearts ; and in the wildest rite
 Cometh no stain to her whose heart is white.

Nay, mark me ! Thou hast thy joy, when the Gate
 Stands thronged, and Pentheus' name is lifted great ✓
 And high by Thebes in clamour ; shall not He
 Rejoice in his due meed of majesty ?

Howbeit, this Cadmus whom thou scorn'st and I
 Will wear His crown, and tread His dances ! Aye,
 Our hairs are white, yet shall that dance be trod !
 I will not lift mine arm to war with God
 For thee nor all thy words. Madness most fell ✓
 Is on thee, madness wrought by some dread spell,
 But not by spell nor leechcraft to be cured !

CHORUS.

Grey prophet, worthy of Phoebus is thy word,
 And wise in honouring Bromios, our great God. ✓✓

CADMUS.

My son, right well Teiresias points thy road. ✓
 Oh, make thine habitation here with us,
 Not lonely, against men's uses. Hazardous

Is this quick bird-like beating of thy thought
 Where no thought dwells.—Grant that this God be
 naught,

Yet let that Naught be Somewhat in thy mouth ;
 Lie boldly, and say He Is ! So north and south
 Shall marvel, how there sprang a thing divine
 From Semelê's flesh, and honour all our line.

[Drawing nearer to PENTHEUS.]

Is there not blood before thine eyes even now ?
 Our lost Actaeon's blood, whom long ago
 His own red hounds through yonder forest dim
 Tore unto death, because he vaunted him
 Against most holy Artemis ? Oh, beware,
 And let me wreath thy temples. Make thy prayer
 With us, and walk thee humbly in God's sight.

[He makes as if to set the wreath on PENTHEUS' head.]

PENTHEUS.

Down with that hand ! Aroint thee to thy rite,
 Nor smear on me thy foul contagion !

[Turning upon TEIRESIAS.]

This

Thy folly's head and prompter shall not miss
 The justice that he needs !—Go, half my guard,
 Forth to the rock-seat where he dwells in ward
 O'er birds and wonders ; rend the stone with crow
 And trident ; make one wreck of high and low,
 And toss his bands to all the winds of air !

Ha, have I found the way to sting thee, there ?
 The rest, forth through the town ! And seek amain
 This girl-faced stranger, that hath wrought such bane
 To all Thebes, preying on our maids and wives.
 Seek till ye find ; and lead him here in gyves,

Till he be judged and stoned, and weep in blood
The day he troubled Pentheus with his God !

[*The guards set forth in two bodies ; PENTHEUS goes into the Castle.*

TEIRESIAS.

Hard heart, how little dost thou know what seed
Thou sowest ! Blind before, and now indeed
Most mad !—Come, Cadmus, let us go our way,
And pray for this our persecutor, pray
For this poor city, that the righteous God
Move not in anger.—Take thine ivy rod
And help my steps, as I help thine. 'Twere ill,
If two old men should fall by the roadway. Still,
Come what come may, our service shall be done
To Bacchios, the All-Father's mystic son.

O Pentheus, named of sorrow ! Shall he claim
From all thy house fulfilment of his name,
Old Cadmus ?—Nay, I speak not from mine art,
But as I see—blind words and a blind heart !

[*The two Old Men go off towards the Mountain.*

CHORUS.

Some Maidens.

Thou Immaculate on high ;
Thou Recording Purity ;
Thou that stoopest, Golden Wing,
Earthward, manward, pitying,
Hearest thou this angry King ?
Hearest thou the rage and scorn
'Gainst the Lord of Many Voices,
Him of mortal mother born,
Him in whom man's heart rejoices,

EURIPIDES

Girt with garlands and with glee,
 First in Heaven's sovranty ?
 For his kingdom, it is there,
 In the dancing and the prayer,
 In the music and the laughter,
 In the vanishing of care,
 And of all before and after ;
 In the Gods' high banquet, when
 Gleams the grape-blood, flashed to
 heaven ;
 Yea, and in the feasts of men
 Comes his crownèd slumber ; then
 Pain is dead and hate forgiven !

Others.

Loose thy lips from out the rein ;
 Lift thy wisdom to disdain ;
 Whatso law thou canst not see,
 Scorning ; so the end shall be
 Uttermost calamity !
 'Tis the life of quiet breath,
 'Tis the simple and the true,
 Storm nor earthquake shattereth,
 Nor shall aught the house undo
 Where they dwell. For, far away,
 Hidden from the eyes of day,
 Watchers are there in the skies,
 That can see man's life, and prize
 Deeds well done by things of clay.
 But the world's Wise are not wise,
 Claiming more than mortal may.
 Life is such a little thing ;
 Lo, their present is departed,

THE BACCHAE

25

And the dreams to which they cling
Come not. Mad imagining
Theirs, I ween, and empty-hearted !

Divers Maidens.

Where is the Home for me ?
O Cyprus, set in the sea,
Aphrodite's home In the soft sea-foam,
Would I could wend to thee ;
Where the wings of the Loves are furled,
And faint the heart of the world.

Aye, unto Paphos' isle,
Where the rainless meadows smile
With riches rolled From the hundred-fold
Mouths of the far-off Nile,
Streaming beneath the waves
To the roots of the seaward caves.

But a better land is there
Where Olympus cleaves the air,
The high still dell Where the Muses dwell,
Fairest of all things fair !
O there is Grace, and there is the Heart's Desire,
And peace to adore thee, thou Spirit of Guiding
Fire !

A God of Heaven is he,
And born in majesty ;
Yet hath he mirth In the joy of the Earth,
And he loveth constantly
Her who brings increase,
The Feeder of Children, Peace.

No grudge hath he of the great ;
 No scorn of the mean estate ;
 But to all that liveth His wine he giveth,
 Griefless, immaculate ;
 Only on them that spurn
 Joy, may his anger burn.

Love thou the Day and the Night ;
 Be glad of the Dark and the Light ;
 And avert thine eyes From the lore of the wise,
 That have honour in proud men's sight.
 The simple nameless herd of Humanity
 Hath deeds and faith that are truth enough for me !

[As the Chorus ceases, a party of the guards return, leading in the midst of them DIONYSUS, bound. The SOLDIER in command stands forth, as PENTHEUS, hearing the tramp of feet, comes out from the Castle.]

SOLDIER.

Our quest is finished, and thy prey, O King,
 Caught ; for the chase was swift, and this wild thing
 Most tame ; yet never flinched, nor thought to flee,
 But held both hands out unresistingly—
 No change, no blanching of the wine-red cheek.—
 He waited while we came, and bade us wreak
 All thy decree; yea, laughed, and made my hest
 Easy, till I for very shame confessed
 And said : ‘O stranger, not of mine own will
 I bind thee, but his bidding to fulfil
 Who sent me.’

And those prisoned Maids withal
 Whom thou didst seize and bind within the wall

THE BACCHAE

27

Of thy great dungeon, they are fled, O King,
Free in the woods, a-dance and glorying
To Bromios. Of their own impulse fell
To earth, men say, fetter and manacle,
And bars slid back untouched of mortal hand.
Yea, full of many wonders to thy land
Is this man come. . . . Howbeit, it lies with thee !

PENTHEUS.

Ye are mad !—Unhand him. Howso swift he be,
My toils are round him and he shall not fly.

[*The guards loose the arms of DIONYSUS ;*
PENTHEUS studies him for a while in silence,
then speaks jeeringly. DIONYSUS remains
gentle and unafraid.

Marry, a fair shape for a woman's eye,
Sir stranger ! And thou seek'st no more, I ween !
Long curls, withal ! That shows thou ne'er hast been
A wrestler !—down both cheeks so softly tossed
And winsome ! And a white skin ! It hath cost
Thee pains, to please thy damsels with this white
And red of cheeks that never face the light !

[DIONYSUS is silent.

Speak, sirrah ; tell me first thy name and race.

DIONYSUS.

No glory is therein, nor yet disgrace.
Thou hast heard of Tmolus, the bright hill of flowers ?

PENTHEUS.

Surely ; the ridge that winds by Sardis' towers

DIONYSUS.

Thence am I ; Lydia was my fatherland.

PENTHEUS.

And whence these revelations, that thy band
Spreadeth in Hellas ?

DIONYSUS.

Their intent and use
Dionysus oped to me, the Child of Zeus.

PENTHEUS (*brutally*).

Is there a Zeus there, that can still beget
Young Gods ?

DIONYSUS.

Nay, only He whose seal was set
Here in thy Thebes on Semelâ.

PENTHEUS.

What way
Descended he upon thee ? In full day
Or vision of night ?

DIONYSUS.

Most clear he stood, and scanned
My soul, and gave his emblems to mine hand.

PENTHEUS.

What like be they, these emblems ?

DIONYSUS.

That may none
Reveal, nor know, save his Elect alone.

PENTHEUS.

And what good bring they to the worshipper ?

DIONYSUS.

Good beyond price, but not for thee to hear.

PENTHEUS.

Thou trickster ! Thou wouldst prick me on the more
To seek them out !

DIONYSUS.

His mysteries abhor
The touch of sin-lovers.

PENTHEUS.

And so thine eyes ✓
Saw this God plain ; what guise had he ?

DIONYSUS.

What guise
It liked him. 'Twas not I ordained his shape.

PENTHEUS.

Aye, deftly turned again. An idle jape,
And nothing answered !

DIONYSUS.

Wise words being brought ✓✓
To blinded eyes will seem as things of nought.

PENTHEUS.

And comest thou first to Thebes, to have thy God ✓
Established ?

DIONYSUS.

Nay ; all Barbary hath trod ✓
His dance ere this.

PENTHEUS.

A low blind folk, I ween,
Beside our Hellenes !

DIONYSUS.

Higher and more keen
In this thing, though their ways are not thy way.

PENTHEUS.

✓ How is thy worship held, by night or day ?

DIONYSUS.

✓ Most oft by night ; 'tis a majestic thing,
The darkness.

PENTHEUS.

Ha ! with women worshipping ?
'Tis craft and rottenness !

DIONYSUS.

By day no less,
Whoso will seek may find unholiness.

PENTHEUS.

✓ Enough ! Thy doom is fixed, for false pretence
Corrupting Thebes.

DIONYSUS.

✓ Not mine ; but thine, for dense
Blindness of heart, and for blaspheming God !

PENTHEUS.

A ready knave it is, and brazen-browed,
This mystery-priest !

DIONYSUS.

✓ Come, say what it shall be,
My doom ; what dire thing wilt thou do to me ?

PENTHEUS.

First, shear that delicate curl that dangles there.

[*He beckons to the soldiers, who approach DIONYSUS.*

DIONYSUS.

I have vowed it to my God ; 'tis holy hair.

[*The soldiers cut off the tress.*

PENTHEUS.

Next, yield me up thy staff !

DIONYSUS.

Raise thine own hand
To take it. This is Dionysus' wand.

[*PENTHEUS takes the staff.*

PENTHEUS.

Last, I will hold thee prisoned here.

DIONYSUS.

My Lord
God will unloose me, when I speak the word.

PENTHEUS.

He may, if e'er again amid his bands
Of saints he hears thy voice !

DIONYSUS.

Even now he stands ✓
Close here, and sees all that I suffer.

PENTHEUS.

What ?
Where is he ? For mine eyes discern him not. /

DIONYSUS.

✓ Where I am ! 'Tis thine own impurity
That veils him from thee.

PENTHEUS.

The dog jeers at me !
At me and Thebes ! Bind him !
[*The soldiers begin to bind him.*

DIONYSUS.

I charge ye, bind
Me not ! I having vision and ye blind !

PENTHEUS.

And I, with better right, say bind the more !

[*The soldiers obey.*

DIONYSUS.

Thou knowest not what end thou seekest, nor
What deed thou doest, nor what man thou art !

PENTHEUS (*mocking*).

Agâvë's son, and on the father's part
Echion's, hight Pentheus !

DIONYSUS.

So let it be,
A name fore-written to calamity !

PENTHEUS.

Away, and tie him where the steeds are tied ;
Aye, let him lie in the manger !—There abide
And stare into the darkness !—And this rout
Of womankind that clusters thee about,

Thy ministers of worship, are my slaves !
 It may be I will sell them o'er the waves,
 Hither and thither ; else they shall be set
 To labour at my distaffs, and forget
 Their timbrel and their songs of dawning day !

DIONYSUS.

I go ; for that which may not be, I may
 Not suffer ! Yet for this thy sin, lo, He
 Whom thou deniest cometh after thee
 For recompense. Yea, in thy wrong to us,
 Thou hast cast Him into thy prison-house !

[DIONYSUS, without his wand, his hair shorn, and
 his arms tightly bound, is led off by the guards
 to his dungeon. PENTHEUS returns into the
 Palace.

CHORUS.

Some Maidens.

Achelous' roaming daughter,
 Holy Dircê, virgin water,
 Bathed he not of old in thee,
 The Babe of God, the Mystery ?
 When from out the fire immortal
 To himself his God did take him,
 To his own flesh, and bespeak him :
 “Enter now life’s second portal,
 Motherless Mystery ; lo, I break
 Mine own body for thy sake,
 Thou of the Twofold Door, and seal thee
 Mine, O Bromios,”—thus he spake—
 “And to this thy land reveal thee.”

All.

Still my prayer toward thee quivers,
 Dircē, still to thee I hie me ;
 Why, O Blessed among Rivers,
 Wilt thou fly me and deny me ?
 By His own joy I vow,
 By the grape upon the bough,
 Thou shalt seek Him in the midnight, thou shalt love
 Him, even now !

Other Maidens.

Dark and of the dark impassioned
 Is this Pentheus' blood ; yea, fashioned
 Of the Dragon, and his birth
 From Echion, child of Earth.
 He is no man, but a wonder ;
 Did the Earth-Child not beget him,
 As a red Giant, to set him
 Against God, against the Thunder ?
 He will bind me for his prize,
 Me, the Bride of Dionyse ;
 And my priest, my friend, is taken
 Even now, and buried lies ;
 In the dark he lies forsaken !

All.

Lo, we race with death, we perish,
 Dionysus, here before thee !
 Dost thou mark us not, nor cherish,
 Who implore thee, and adore thee ?
 Hither down Olympus' side,
 Come, O Holy One defied,
 Be thy golden wand uplifted o'er the tyrant in his pride !

A Maiden.

Oh, where art thou ? In thine own
Nysa, thou our help alone ?
O'er fierce beasts in orient lands
Doth thy thronging thyrsus wave,
By the high Corycian Cave,
Or where stern Olympus stands ;
In the elm-woods and the oaken,
There where Orpheus harped of old,
And the trees awoke and knew him,
And the wild things gathered to him,
As he sang amid the broken
Glens his music manifold ?
Blessed Land of Piërie,
Dionysus loveth thee ;
He will come to thee with dancing,
Come with joy and mystery ;
With the Maenads at his hest
Winding, winding to the West ;
Cross the flood of swiftly glancing
Axios in majesty ;
Cross the Lydias, the giver
Of good gifts and waving green ;
Cross that Father-Stream of story,
Through a land of steeds and glory
Rolling, bravest, fairest River
E'er of mortals seen !

A VOICE WITHIN.

Io ! Io !

Awake, ye damsels ; hear my cry,
Calling my Chosen ; hearken ye !

A MAIDEN.

Who speaketh? Oh, what echoes thus?

ANOTHER.

A Voice, a Voice, that calleth us!

THE VOICE.

Be of good cheer! Lo, it is I,
The Child of Zeus and Semele.

A MAIDEN.

O Master, Master, it is Thou!

ANOTHER.

O Holy Voice, be with us now!

THE VOICE.

Spirit of the Chained Earthquake,
Hear my word; awake, awake!

[An Earthquake suddenly shakes the pillars of the Castle.]

A MAIDEN.

Ha! what is coming? Shall the hall
Of Pentheus racked in ruin fall?

LEADER.

Our God is in the house! Ye maids adore Him!

CHORUS.

We adore Him all!

THE VOICE.

Unveil the Lightning's eye ; arouse
The fire that sleeps, against this house !

[*Fire leaps up on the Tomb of Semelé.*

A MAIDEN.

Ah, saw ye, marked ye there the flame
From Semelé's enhallowed sod
Awakened ? Yea, the Death that came
Ablaze from heaven of old, the same
Hot splendour of the shaft of God ?

LEADER.

Oh, cast ye, cast ye, to the earth ! The Lord
Cometh against this house ! Oh, cast ye down,
Ye trembling damsels ; He, our own adored,
God's Child hath come, and all is overthrown !

[*The Maidens cast themselves upon the ground,
their eyes earthward.* DIONYSUS, alone and
unbound, enters from the Castle.

DIONYSUS.

Ye Damsels of the Morning Hills, why lie ye thus
dismayed ?
Ye marked him, then, our Master, and the mighty
hand he laid
On tower and rock, shaking the house of Pentheus ?
—But arise,
And cast the trembling from your flesh, and lift un-
troubled eyes.

LEADER.

O Light in Darkness, is it thou ? O Priest, is this thy face ?
My heart leaps out to greet thee from the deep of loneliness.

DIONYSUS.

Fell ye so quick despairing, when beneath the Gate I passed ?

✓ Should the gates of Pentheus quell me, or his darkness make me fast ?

LEADER.

Oh, what was left if thou wert gone ? What could I but despair ?

✓ How hast thou 'scaped the man of sin ? Who freed thee from the snare ?

DIONYSUS.

I had no pain nor peril ; 'twas mine own hand set me free.

LEADER.

Thine arms were gyvèd !

DIONYSUS.

Nay, no gyve, no touch, was laid on me ! 'Twas there I mocked him, in his gyves, and gave him dreams for food.

For when he led me down, behold, before the stall there stood

A Bull of Offering. And this King, he bit his lips, and straight

Fell on and bound it, hoof and limb, with gasping wrath and sweat.

And I sat watching!—Then a Voice; and lo, our
Lord was come,
And the house shook, and a great flame stood o'er his
mother's tomb.
And Pentheus hied this way and that, and called his
thralls amain
For water, lest his roof-tree burn; and all toiled, all
in vain.
Then deemed a-sudden I was gone; and left his fire,
and sped
Back to the prison portals, and his lifted sword shone red.
But there, methinks, the God had wrought—I speak
but as I guess—
Some dream-shape in mine image; for he smote at
emptiness,
Stabbed in the air, and strove in wrath, as though
'twere me he slew.
Then 'mid his dreams God smote him yet again! He
overthrew
All that high house. And there in wreck for ever-
more it lies,
That the day of this my bondage may be sore in
Pentheus' eyes!
And now his sword is fallen, and he lies outworn
and wan
Who dared to rise against his God in wrath, being
but man.
And I uprose and left him, and in all peace took my
path
Forth to my Chosen, recking light of Pentheus and
his wrath.
But soft, methinks a footstep sounds even now
within the hall;

'Tis he ; how think ye he will stand, and what words
speak withal ?

I will endure him gently, though he come in fury hot.
For still are the ways of Wisdom, and her temper
trembleth not !

Enter PENTHEUS in fury.

PENTHEUS.

It is too much ! This Eastern knave hath slipped
His prison, whom I held but now, hard gripped
In bondage.—Ha ! 'Tis he !—What, sirrah, how
Show'st thou before my portals ?

[*He advances furiously upon him.*

DIONYSUS.

Softly thou !

And set a quiet carriage to thy rage.

PENTHEUS.

How comest thou here ? How didst thou break thy
cage ?

Speak !

DIONYSUS.

Said I not, or didst thou mark not me,
There was One living that should set me free ?

PENTHEUS.

Who ? Ever wilder are these tales of thine.

DIONYSUS.

He who first made for man the clustered vine,

PENTHEUS.

I scorn him and his vines !

DIONYSUS.

For Dionyse

'Tis well; for in thy scorn his glory lies.

PENTHEUS (*to his guard*).

Go swift to all the towers, and bar withal
Each gate!

DIONYSUS.

What, cannot God o'erleap a wall?

PENTHEUS.

Oh, wit thou hast, save where thou needest it!

DIONYSUS.

Whereso it most imports, there is my wit!—
Nay, peace! Abide till he who hasteth from
The mountain side with news for thee, be come.
We will not fly, but wait on thy command.

[Enter suddenly and in haste a Messenger from
the Mountain.

MESSENGER.

Great Pentheus, Lord of all this Theban land,
I come from high Kithaeron, where the frore
Snow spangles gleam and cease not evermore. . .

PENTHEUS.

And what of import may thy coming bring?

MESSENGER.

I have seen the Wild White Women there, O King,
Whose fleet limbs darted arrow-like but now
From Thebes away, and come to tell thee how

They work strange deeds and passing marvel. Yet
 I first would learn thy pleasure. Shall I set
 My whole tale forth, or veil the stranger part ?
 Yea, Lord, I fear the swiftness of thy heart,
 Thine edged wrath and more than royal soul.

PENTHEUS.

Thy tale shall nothing scathe thee.—Tell the whole.
 It skills not to be wroth with honesty.
 Nay, if thy news of them be dark, 'tis he
 Shall pay it, who bewitched and led them on.

MESSENGER.

Our herded kine were moving in the dawn
 Up to the peaks, the greyest, coldest time,
 When the first rays steal earthward, and the rime
 Yields, when I saw three bands of them. The
 one

Autonoë led, one Ino, one thine own
 Mother, Agâvê. There beneath the trees
 Sleeping they lay, like wild things flung at ease
 In the forest ; one half sinking on a bed
 Of deep pine greenery ; one with careless head
 Amid the fallen oak leaves ; all most cold
 In purity—not as thy tale was told
 Of wine-cups and wild music and the chase
 For love amid the forest's loneliness.
 Then rose the Queen Agâvê suddenly
 Amid her band, and gave the God's wild cry,
 "Awake, ye Bacchanals ! I hear the sound
 Of horned kine. Awake ye!"—Then, all round,
 Alert, the warm sleep fallen from their eyes,
 A marvel of swift ranks I saw them rise,

Dames young and old, and gentle maids unwed
Among them. O'er their shoulders first they shed
Their tresses, and caught up the fallen fold
Of mantles where some clasp had loosened hold,
And girt the dappled fawn-skins in with long
Quick snakes that hissed and writhed with quivering
tongue.

And one a young fawn held, and one a wild
Wolf cub, and fed them with white milk, and smiled
In love, young mothers with a mother's breast
And babes at home forgotten ! Then they pressed
Wreathed ivy round their brows, and oaken sprays
And flowering bryony. And one would raise
Her wand and smite the rock, and straight a jet
Of quick bright water came. Another set
Her thyrsus in the bosomed earth, and there
Was red wine that the God sent up to her,
A darkling fountain. And if any lips
Sought whiter draughts, with dipping finger-tips
They pressed the sod, and gushing from the ground
Came springs of milk. And reed-wands ivy-crowned
Ran with sweet honey, drop by drop.—O King,
Hadst thou been there, as I, and seen this thing,
With prayer and most high wonder hadst thou gone
To adore this God whom now thou rail'st upon !

Howbeit, the kine-wardens and shepherds straight
Came to one place, amazed, and held debate ;
And one being there who walked the streets and scanned
The ways of speech, took lead of them whose hand
Knew but the slow soil and the solemn hill,
And flattering spoke, and asked : “ Is it your will,
Masters, we stay the mother of the King,
Agâvê, from her lawless worshipping,

And win us royal thanks?"—And this seemed good
To all; and through the branching underwood
We hid us, cowering in the leaves. And there
Through the appointed hour they made their prayer
And worship of the Wand, with one accord
Of heart and cry—"Iacchos, Bromios, Lord,
God of God born!"—And all the mountain felt,
And worshipped with them; and the wild things knelt
And ramped and gloried, and the wilderness
Was filled with moving voices and dim stress.

Soon, as it chanced, beside my thicket-close
The Queen herself passed dancing, and I rose
And sprang to seize her. But she turned her face
Upon me: "Ho, my rovers of the chase,
My wild White Hounds, we are hunted! Up, each
rod

And follow, follow, for our Lord and God!"
Thereat, for fear they tear us, all we fled
Amazed; and on, with hand unweaponed
They swept toward our herds that browsed the green
Hill grass. Great uddered kine then hadst thou seen
Bellowing in sword-like hands that cleave and tear,
A live steer riven asunder, and the air
Tossed with rent ribs or limbs of cloven tread,
And flesh upon the branches, and a red
Rain from the deep green pines. Yea, bulls of pride,
Horns swift to rage, were fronted and aside
Flung stumbling, by those multitudinous hands
Dragged pitilessly. And swifter were the bands
Of garbed flesh and bone unbound withal
Than on thy royal eyes the lids may fall.

Then on like birds, by their own speed upborne,
They swept toward the plains of waving corn

That lie beside Asopus' banks, and bring
To Thebes the rich fruit of her harvesting.
On Hysiae and Erythrae that lie nursed
Amid Kithaeron's bowering rocks, they burst
Destroying, as a foeman's army comes.

They caught up little children from their homes,
High on their shoulders, babes unheld, that swayed
And laughed and fell not ; all a wreck they made ;
Yea, bronze and iron did shatter, and in play
Struck hither and thither, yet no wound had they ;
Caught fire from out the hearths, yea, carried hot
Flames in their tresses and were scorched not !

The village folk in wrath took spear and sword,
And turned upon the Bacchae. Then, dread Lord,
The wonder was. For spear nor barbèd brand
Could scathe nor touch the damsels ; but the Wand,
The soft and wreathèd wand their white hands sped,
Blasted those men and quelled them, and they fled
Dizzily. Sure some God was in these things !

And the holy women back to those strange springs
Returned, that God had sent them when the day
Dawned, on the upper heights ; and washed away
The stain of battle. And those girdling snakes
Hissed out to lap the waterdrops from cheeks
And hair and breast.

Therefore I counsel thee,
O King, receive this Spirit, whoe'er he be,
To Thebes in glory. Greatness manifold
Is all about him ; and the tale is told
That this is he who first to man did give
The grief-assuaging vine. Oh, let him live ;
For if he die, then Love herself is slain,
And nothing joyous in the world again !

LEADER.

Albeit I tremble, and scarce may speak my thought
To a king's face, yet will I hide it not.
Dionyse is God, no God more true nor higher !

PENTHEUS.

It bursts hard by us, like a smothered fire,
This frenzy of Bacchic women ! All my land
Is made their mock.—This needs an iron hand !

Ho, Captain ! Quick to the Electran Gate ;
Bid gather all my men-at-arms thereat ;
Call all that spur the charger, all who know
To wield the orbèd targe or bend the bow ;
We march to war !—'Fore God, shall women dare
Such deeds against us ? 'Tis too much to bear !

DIONYSUS.

Thou mark'st me not, O King, and holdest light
My solemn words ; yet, in thine own despite,
I warn thee still. Lift thou not up thy spear
Against a God, but hold thy peace, and fear
His wrath ! He will not brook it, if thou fright
His Chosen from the hills of their delight.

PENTHEUS.

Peace, thou ! And if for once thou hast slipped thy
chain,
Give thanks !—Or shall I knot thine arms again ?

DIONYSUS.

Better to yield him prayer and sacrifice
Than kick against the pricks, since Dionyse
Is God, and thou but mortal.

PENTHEUS.

That will I !
 Yea, sacrifice of women's blood, to cry
 His name through all Kithaeron !

DIONYSUS.

Ye shall fly,
 All, and abase your shields of bronzen rim
 Before their wands.

PENTHEUS.

There is no way with him,
 This stranger that so dogs us ! Well or ill
 I may entreat him, he must babble still !

DIONYSUS.

Wait, good my friend ! These crooked matters may
 Even yet be straightened.

[PENTHEUS has started as though to seek his army
 at the gate.]

PENTHEUS.

Aye, if I obey
 Mine own slaves' will ; how else ?

DIONYSUS.

Myself will lead
 The damsels hither, without sword or steed.

PENTHEUS.

How now ?—This is some plot against me !

DIONYSUS.

Dost fear ? Only to save thee do I plot.

What

PENTHEUS.

✓ It is some compact ye have made, whereby
To dance these hills for ever !

DIONYSUS.

✓ Verily,
That is my compact, plighted with my Lord !

PENTHEUS (*turning from him*).

Ho, armourers ! Bring forth my shield and sword !—
And thou, be silent !

DIONYSUS

(*after regarding him fixedly, speaks with resignation*).

Ah !—Have then thy will !

[*He fixes his eyes upon PENTHEUS again, while the armourers bring out his armour ; then speaks in a tone of command.*

Man, thou wouldest fain behold them on the hill
Praying !

PENTHEUS

(*who during the rest of this scene, with a few exceptions, simply speaks the thoughts that DIONYSUS puts into him, losing power over his own mind*).

That would I, though it cost me all
The gold of Thebes !

DIONYSUS.

So much ? Thou art quick to fall
To such great longing.

PENTHEUS

(*somewhat bewildered at what he has said*).

Aye ; 'twould grieve me much
To see them flown with wine.

DIONYSUS.

Yet cravest thou such
A sight as would much grieve thee ?

PENTHEUS.

Yes ; I fain
Would watch, ambushed among the pines.

DIONYSUS.

'Twere vain
To hide. They soon will track thee out.

PENTHEUS.

Well said !
'Twere best done openly.

DIONYSUS.

Wilt thou be led
By me, and try the venture ?

PENTHEUS.

Aye, indeed !
Lead on. Why should we tarry ?

DIONYSUS.

First we need
A rich and trailing robe of fine-linen
To gird thee.

PENTHEUS.

Nay ; am I a woman, then,
And no man more ?

DIONYSUS.

Wouldst have them slay thee dead ?
No man may see their mysteries.

PENTHEUS.

Well said!—

I marked thy subtle temper long ere now.

DIONYSUS.

✓ 'Tis Dionyse that prompteth me.

PENTHEUS.

And how

Mean'st thou the further plan?

DIONYSUS.

First take thy way

Within. I will array thee.

PENTHEUS.

What array?

The woman's? Nay, I will not.

DIONYSUS.

Doth it change

✓ So soon, all thy desire to see this strange
Adoring?

PENTHEUS.

Wait! What garb wilt thou bestow
About me?

DIONYSUS.

First a long tress dangling low
Beneath thy shoulders.

PENTHEUS.

Aye, and next?

DIONYSUS.

The said

Robe, falling to thy feet ; and on thine head
A snood.

PENTHEUS.

And after ? Hast thou aught beyond ?

DIONYSUS.

Surely ; the dappled fawn-skin and the wand.

PENTHEUS (*after a struggle with himself*).

Enough ! I cannot wear a robe and snood.

DIONYSUS.

Wouldst liefer draw the sword and spill men's blood ?

PENTHEUS (*again doubting*).

True, that were evil.—Aye ; 'tis best to go
First to some place of watch.

DIONYSUS.

Far wiser so,
Than seek by wrath wrath's bitter recompense.

PENTHEUS.

What of the city streets ? Canst lead me hence
Unseen of any ?

DIONYSUS.

Lonely and untried
Thy path from hence shall be, and I thy guide !

PENTHEUS.

I care for nothing, so these Bacchanals
Triumph not against me ! . . . Forward to my halls
Within !—I will ordain what seemeth best.

DIONYSUS.

So be it, O King ! 'Tis mine to obey thine hest,
Whate'er it be.

PENTHEUS

(*after hesitating once more and waiting*).

Well, I will go—perchance
To march and scatter them with serried lance,
Perchance to take thy plan. . . . I know not yet.

[*Exit PENTHEUS into the Castle.*

DIONYSUS.

Damsels, the lion walketh to the net !
He finds his Bacchae now, and sees and dies,
And pays for all his sin !—O Dionyse,
This is thine hour and thou not far away.
Grant us our vengeance !—First, O Master, stay
The course of reason in him, and instil
A foam of madness. Let his seeing will,
Which ne'er had stooped to put thy vesture on,
Be darkened, till the deed is lightly done.
Grant likewise that he find through all his streets
Loud scorn, this man of wrath and bitter threats
That made Thebes tremble, led in woman's guise.

I go to fold that robe of sacrifice
On Pentheus, that shall deck him to the dark,
His mother's gift !—So shall he learn and mark
God's true Son, Dionyse, in fulness God,
Most fearful, yet to man most soft of mood.

[*Exit DIONYSUS, following PENTHEUS into the Castle.*

CHORUS.

Some Maidens.

Will they ever come to me, ever again,
 The long long dances,
 On through the dark till the dim stars wane ?
 Shall I feel the dew on my throat, and the stream
 Of wind in my hair ? Shall our white feet gleam
 In the dim expanses ?
 Oh, feet of a fawn to the greenwood fled,
 Alone in the grass and the loveliness ;
 Leap of the hunted, no more in dread,
 Beyond the snares and the deadly press :
 Yet a voice still in the distance sounds,
 A voice and a fear and a haste of hounds ;
 O wildly labouring, fiercely fleet,
 Onward yet by river and glen . . .
 Is it joy or terror, ye storm-swift feet ? . . .
 To the dear lone lands untroubled of men,
 Where no voice sounds, and amid the shadowy green
 The little things of the woodland live unseen.
 What else is Wisdom ? What of man's endeavour
 Or God's high grace, so lovely and so great ?
 To stand from fear set free, to breathe and wait ;
 To hold a hand uplifted over Hate ;
 And shall not Loveliness be loved for ever ?

Others.

O Strength of God, slow art thou and still,
 Yet failest never !
 On them that worship the Ruthless Will,
 On them that dream, doth His judgment wait.
 Dreams of the proud man, making great
 And greater ever,

Things which are not of God. In wide
 And devious coverts, hunter-wise,
 He coucheth Time's unhasting stride,
 Following, following, him whose eyes
 Look not to Heaven. For all is vain,
 The pulse of the heart, the plot of the brain,
 That striveth beyond the laws that live.
 And is thy Faith so much to give,
 Is it so hard a thing to see,
 That the Spirit of God, whate'er it be,
 The Law that abides and changes not, ages long,
 The Eternal and Nature-born—these things be strong?
 What else is Wisdom? What of man's endeavour
 Or God's high grace so lovely and so great?
 To stand from fear set free, to breathe and wait;
 To hold a hand uplifted over Hate;
 And shall not Loveliness be loved for ever?

LEADER.

Happy he, on the weary sea
 Who hath fled the tempest and won the haven.
 Happy whoso hath risen, free,
 Above his striving. For strangely graven
 Is the orb of life, that one and another
 In gold and power may outpass his brother.
 And men in their millions float and flow
 And seethe with a million hopes as leaven;
 And they win their Will, or they miss their Will,
 And the hopes are dead or are pined for still;
 But whoe'er can know,
 As the long days go,
 That To Live is happy, hath found his Heaven!

Re-enter DIONYSUS from the Castle.

DIONYSUS.

O eye that cravest sights thou must not see,
 O heart athirst for that which slakes not ! Thee,
 Pentheus, I call ; forth and be seen, in guise
 Of woman, Maenad, saint of Dionyse,
 To spy upon His Chosen and thine own
 Mother !

[Enter PENTHEUS, clad like a Bacchanal, and
*strangely excited, a spirit of Bacchic madness
 overshadowing him.*

Thy shape, methinks, is like to one
 Of Cadmus' royal maids !

PENTHEUS.

Yea ; and mine eye
 Is bright ! Yon sun shines twofold in the sky,
 Thebes twofold and the Wall of Seven Gates. . . .
 And is it a Wild Bull this, that walks and waits
 Before me ? There are horns upon thy brow !
 What art thou, man or beast ? For surely now
 The Bull is on thee !

DIONYSUS.

He who erst was wrath,
 Goes with us now in gentleness. He hath
 Unsealed thine eyes to see what thou shouldst see.

PENTHEUS.

Say ; stand I not as Ino stands, or she
 Who bore me ?

DIONYSUS.

When I look on thee, it seems
I see their very selves!—But stay; why streams
That lock abroad, not where I laid it, crossed
Under the coif?

PENTHEUS.

I did it, as I tossed
My head in dancing, to and fro, and cried
His holy music!

DIONYSUS (*tending him*).

It shall soon be tied
Aright. 'Tis mine to tend thee. . . . Nay, but stand
With head straight.

PENTHEUS.

In the hollow of thy hand
I lay me. Deck me as thou wilt.

DIONYSUS.

Thy zone
Is loosened likewise; and the folded gown
Not evenly falling to the feet.

PENTHEUS.

'Tis so,
By the right foot. But here, methinks, they flow
In one straight line to the heel.

DIONYSUS (*while tending him*).

And if thou prove
Their madness true, aye, more than true, what love
And thanks hast thou for me?

PENTHEUS (*not listening to him*).

In my right hand

Is it, or thus, that I should bear the wand,
To be most like to them ?

DIONYSUS.

Up let it swing

In the right hand, timed with the right foot's
spring. . . .

'Tis well thy heart is changed !

PENTHEUS (*more wildly*).

What strength is this !

Kithaeron's steeps and all that in them is—
How say'st thou ?—Could my shoulders lift the whole

DIONYSUS.

Surely thou canst, and if thou wilt ! Thy soul,
Being once so sick, now stands as it should stand.

PENTHEUS.

Shall it be bars of iron ? Or this bare hand
And shoulder to the crags, to wrench them down ?

DIONYSUS.

Wouldst wreck the Nymphs' wild temples, and the
brown
Rocks, where Pan pipes at noonday ?

PENTHEUS.

Nay ; not I !

Force is not well with women. I will lie
Hid in the pine-brake.

DIONYSUS.

Even as fits a spy
On holy and fearful things, so shalt thou lie !

PENTHEUS (*with a laugh*).

They lie there now, methinks—the wild birds, caught
By love among the leaves, and fluttering not !

DIONYSUS.

It may be. That is what thou goest to see,
Aye, and to trap them—so they trap not thee !

PENTHEUS.

Forth through the Thebans' town ! I am their king,
Aye, their one Man, seeing I dare this thing !

DIONYSUS.

Yea, thou shalt bear their burden, thou alone ;
Therefore thy trial awaiteth thee !—But on ;
With me into thine ambush shalt thou come
Unscathed ; then let another bear thee home !

PENTHEUS.

The Queen, my mother.

DIONYSUS.

Marked of every eye.

PENTHEUS.

For that I go !

DIONYSUS.

Thou shalt be borne on high !

PENTHEUS.

That were like pride !

DIONYSUS.

Thy mother's hands shall share

Thy carrying.

PENTHEUS.

Nay ; I need not such soft care !

DIONYSUS.

So soft ?

PENTHEUS.

Whate'er it be, I have earned it well !

[Exit PENTHEUS towards the Mountain.

DIONYSUS.

Fell, fell art thou ; and to a doom so fell
Thou walkest, that thy name from South to North
Shall shine, a sign for ever !—Reach thou forth
Thine arms, Agâvê, now, and ye dark-browed
Cadmeian sisters ! Greet this prince so proud
To the high ordeal, where save God and me,
None walks unscathed !—The rest this day shall see.

[Exit DIONYSUS following PENTHEUS.

CHORUS.

Some Maidens.

O hounds raging and blind,
Up by the mountain road,
Sprites of the maddened mind,
To the wild Maids of God ;
Fill with your rage their eyes,
Rage at the rage unblest,
Watching in woman's guise,
The spy upon God's Possessed.

A Bacchanal.

Who shall be first, to mark
 Eyes in the rock that spy,
 Eyes in the pine-tree dark—
 Is it his mother?—and cry :
 “ Lo, what is this that comes,
 Haunting, troubling still,
 Even in our heights, our homes,
 The wild Maids of the Hill?
 What flesh bare this child?
 Never on woman’s breast
 Changeling so evil smiled ;
 Man is he not, but Beast!
 Lion-shape of the wild,
 Gorgon-breed of the waste ! ”

All the Chorus.

Hither, for doom and deed !
 Hither with lifted sword,
 Justice, Wrath of the Lord,
 Come in our visible need !
 Smite till the throat shall bleed,
 Smite till the heart shall bleed,
 Him the tyrannous, lawless, Godless, Echion’s earth-born seed !

Other Maidens.

Tyrannously hath he trod ;
 Marched him, in Law’s despite,
 Against thy Light, O God,
 Yea, and thy Mother’s Light ;
 Girded him, falsely bold,
 Blinded in craft, to quell
 And by man’s violence hold
 Things unconquerable.

A Bacchanal.

A strait pitiless mind
 Is death unto godliness ;
 And to feel in human kind
 Life, and a pain the less.
 Knowledge, we are not foes !
 I seek thee diligently ;
 But the world with a great wind blows,
 Shining, and not from thee ;
 Blowing to beautiful things,
 On, amid dark and light,
 Till Life, through the trammellings
 Of Laws that are not the Right,
 Breaks, clean and pure, and sings
 Glorying to God in the height ! .

All the Chorus.

Hither for doom and deed !
 Hither with lifted sword,
 Justice, Wrath of the Lord,
 Come in our visible need !
 Smite till the throat shall bleed,
 Smite till the heart shall bleed,
 Him the tyrannous, lawless, Godless, Echion's earth-born seed !

LEADER.

Appear, appear, whatso thy shape or name
 O Mountain Bull, Snake of the Hundred Heads,
 Lion of Burning Flame !
 O God, Beast, Mystery, come ! Thy mystic maids
 Are hunted !—Blast their hunter with thy breath,
 Cast o'er his head thy snare ;
 And laugh aloud and drag him to his death,
 Who stalks thy herded madness in its lair !

*Enter hastily a MESSENGER from the Mountain,
pale and distraught.*

MESSENGER.

Woe to the house once blest in Hellas ! Woe
To thee, old King Sidonian, who didst sow
The dragon-seed on Ares' bloody lea !
Alas, even thy slaves must weep for thee !

LEADER.

News from the mountain ?—Speak ! How hath it
sped ?

MESSENGER.

Pentheus, my king, Echion's son, is dead !

LEADER.

All hail, God of the Voice,
Manifest ever more !

MESSENGER.

What say'st thou ?—And how strange thy tone, as
though
In joy at this my master's overthrow !

LEADER.

With fierce joy I rejoice,
Child of a savage shore ;
For the chains of my prison are broken, and the dread
where I cowered of yore !

MESSENGER.

And deem'st thou Thebes so beggared, so forlorn
Of manhood, as to sit beneath thy scorn ?

LEADER.

Thebes hath o'er me no sway !
None save Him I obey,
Dionysus, Child of the Highest, Him I obey and adore !

MESSENGER.

One can forgive thee !—Yet 'tis no fair thing,
Maids, to rejoice in a man's suffering.

LEADER.

Speak of the mountain side !
Tell us the doom he died,
The sinner smitten to death, even where his sin was
sore !

MESSENGER.

We climbed beyond the utmost habitings
Of Theban shepherds, passed Asopus' springs,
And struck into the land of rock on dim
Kithaeron—Pentheus, and, attending him,
I, and the Stranger who should guide our way.
Then first in a green dell we stopped, and lay,
Lips dumb and feet unmoving, warily
Watching, to be unseen and yet to see.

A narrow glen it was, by crags o'ertowered,
Torn through by tossing waters, and there lowered
A shadow of great pines over it. And there
The Maenad maidens sate ; in toil they were,
Busily glad. Some with an ivy chain
Tricked a worn wand to toss its locks again ;
Some, wild in joyance, like young steeds set free,
Made answering songs of mystic melody.

But my poor master saw not the great band
Before him. “Stranger,” cried he, “where we stand

Mine eyes can reach not these false saints of thine.
Mount we the bank, or some high-shouldered pine,
And I shall see their follies clear !” At that
There came a marvel. For the Stranger straight
Touched a great pine-tree’s high and heavenward
crown,
And lower, lower, lower, urged it down
To the herbless floor. Round like a bending bow,
Or slow wheel’s rim a joiner forces to,
So in those hands that tough and mountain stem
Bowed slow—oh, strength not mortal dwelt in them!—
To the very earth. And there he set the King,
And slowly, lest it cast him in its spring,
Let back the young and straining tree, till high
It towered again amid the towering sky ;
And Pentheus in the branches ! Well, I ween,
He saw the Maenads then, and well was seen !
For scarce was he aloft, when suddenly
There was no Stranger any more with me,
But out of Heaven a Voice—oh, what voice else ?—
’Twas He that called ! “ Behold, O damosels,
I bring ye him who turneth to despite
Both me and ye, and darkeneth my great Light.
”Tis yours to avenge !” So spake he, and there came
”Twixt earth and sky a pillar of high flame.
And silence took the air, and no leaf stirred
In all the forest dell. Thou hadst not heard
In that vast silence any wild thing’s cry.
And up they sprang ; but with bewildered eye,
Agaze and listening, scarce yet hearing true.
Then came the Voice again. And when they knew
Their God’s clear call, old Cadmus’ royal brood,
Up, like wild pigeons startled in a wood,

On flying feet they came, his mother blind,
→ Agâvê, and her sisters, and behind
→ All the wild crowd, more deeply maddened then,
Through the angry rocks and torrent-tossing glen,
Until they spied him in the dark pine-tree :
Then climbed a crag hard by and furiously
Some sought to stone him, some their wands would fling
Lance-wise aloft, in cruel targeting.
But none could strike. The height o'ertopped their
rage,
And there he clung, unscathed, as in a cage
Caught. And of all their strife no end was found.
Then, "Hither," cried Agâvê ; "stand we round
And grip the stem, my Wild Ones, till we take
→ This climbing cat-o'-the-mount ! He shall not make
→ A tale of God's high dances !" Out then shone
Arm upon arm, past count, and closed upon
The pine, and gripped ; and the ground gave, and down
It reeled. And that high sitter from the crown
Of the green pine-top, with a shrieking cry
Fell, as his mind grew clear, and there hard by
Was horror visible. 'Twas his mother stood
O'er him, first priestess of those rites of blood.
He tore the coif, and from his head away
Flung it, that she might know him, and not slay
To her own misery. He touched the wild
Cheek, crying : "Mother, it is I, thy child,
Thy Pentheus, born thee in Echion's hall !
Have mercy, Mother ! Let it not befall
Through sin of mine, that thou shouldst slay thy son !"
But she, with lips a-foam and eyes that run
Like leaping fire, with thoughts that ne'er should be
→ On earth, possessed by Bacchios utterly,

Stays not nor hears. Round his left arm she put
Both hands, set hard against his side her foot,
Drew . . . and the shoulder severed!—Not by might
Of arm, but easily, as the God made light
Her hand's essay. And at the other side
Was Ino rending; and the torn flesh cried,
And on Autonoë pressed, and all the crowd
Of ravening arms. Yea, all the air was loud
With groans that faded into sobbing breath,
Dim shrieks, and joy, and triumph-cries of death.
And here was borne a severed arm, and there
A hunter's booted foot; white bones lay bare
With rending; and swift hands ensanguinèd
Tossed as in sport the flesh of Pentheus dead.

His body lies afar. The precipice
Hath part, and parts in many an interstice
Lurk of the tangled woodland—no light quest
To find. And, ah, the head! Of all the rest,
His mother hath it, pierced upon a wand,
As one might pierce a lion's, and through the land,
Leaving her sisters in their dancing place,
Bears it on high! Yea, to these walls her face
Was set, exulting in her deed of blood,
Calling upon her Bromios, her God,
Her Comrade, Fellow-Render of the Prey,
Her All-Victorious, to whom this day
She bears in triumph . . . her own broken heart!

For me, after that sight, I will depart
Before Agâvê comes.—Oh, to fulfil
God's laws, and have no thought beyond His will,
Is man's best treasure. Aye, and wisdom true,
Methinks, for things of dust to cleave unto!

[*The MESSENGER departs into the Castle.*

CHORUS.

Some Maidens.

Weave ye the dance, and call
Praise to God !

Bless ye the Tyrant's fall !
Down is trod

Pentheus, the Dragon's Seed !
Wore he the woman's weed ?
Clasped he his death indeed,
Clasped the rod ?

A Bacchanal.

Yea, the wild ivy lapt him, and the doomed
Wild Bull of Sacrifice before him loomed !

Others.

Ye who did Bromios scorn,
Praise Him the more,
Bacchanals, Cadmus-born ;
Praise with sore
Agony, yea, with tears !
Great are the gifts he bears !
Hands that a mother rears
Red with gore !

LEADER.

→ But stay, Agâvê cometh ! And her eyes
Make fire around her, reeling ! Ho, the prize
Cometh ! All hail, O Rout of Dionyse !

[Enter from the Mountain AGAVE, mad, and to
all seeming wondrously happy, bearing the head
of PENTHEUS in her hand. The CHORUS
MAIDENS stand horror-struck at the sight ;
the LEADER, also horror-struck, strives to
accept it and rejoice in it as the God's deed.

AGAVE.

Ye from the lands of Morn !

LEADER.

Call me not ; I give praise !

AGAVE.

Lo, from the trunk new-shorn
Hither a Mountain Thorn
Bear we ! O Asia-born
Bacchanals, bless this chase !

LEADER.

I see. Yea ; I see.
Have I not welcomed thee ?

AGAVE (*very calmly and peacefully*).

He was young in the wildwood :
Without nets I caught him !
Nay ; look without fear on
The Lion ; I have ta'en him !

LEADER.

Where in the wildwood ?
Whence have ye brought him ?

AGAVE.

Kithaeron. . . .

LEADER.

Kithaeron ?

AGAVE.

The Mountain hath slain him !

LEADER.

Who first came nigh him ?

AGAVE.

I, I, 'tis confessèd !
And they named me there by him
Agâvê the Blessèd !

LEADER.

Who was next in the band on him ?

AGAVE.

The daughters . . .

LEADER.

The daughters ?

AGAVE.

Of Cadmus laid hand on him.

But the swift hand that slaughterers
Is mine ; mine is the praise !
Bless ye this day of days !

[The LEADER tries to speak, but is not able;
AGAVE begins gently stroking the head.]

AGAVE.

Gather ye now to the feast !

LEADER.

Feast !—O miserable !

AGAVE.

See, it falls to his breast,
Curling and gently tressed,
The hair of the Wild Bull's crest—
The young steer of the fell !

LEADER.

Most like a beast of the wild
That head, those locks defiled.

AGAVE (*lifting up the head, more excitedly*).

He wakened his Mad Ones,
A Chase-God, a wise God !
He sprang them to seize this !
He preys where his band preys.

LEADER (*brooding, with horror*).

In the trail of thy Mad Ones
Thou tearest thy prize, God !

AGAVE.

Dost praise it ?

LEADER.

I praise this ?

AGAVE.

Ah, soon shall the land praise !

LEADER.

And Pentheus, O Mother,
Thy child ?

AGAVE.

He shall cry on
My name as none other,
Bless the spoils of the Lion !

LEADER.

Aye, strange is thy treasure !

AGAVE.

And strange was the taking !

LEADER.

Thou art glad ?

AGAVE.

Beyond measure ;

Yea, glad in the breaking
Of dawn upon all this land,
By the prize, the prize of my hand !

LEADER.

Show then to all the land, unhappy one,
The trophy of this deed that thou hast done !

AGAVE.

Ho, all ye men that round the citadel
And shining towers of ancient Thêbê dwell,
Come ! Look upon this prize, this lion's spoil,
That we have taken—yea, with our own toil,
We, Cadmus' daughters ! Not with leathern-set
Thessalian javelins, not with hunter's net,
Only white arms and swift hands' bladed fall.
Why make ye much ado, and boast withal
Your armourers' engines ? See, these palms were
bare

That caught the angry beast, and held, and tare
The limbs of him ! . . . Father ! . . . Go, bring
to me

My father ! . . . Aye, and Pentheus, where is he,

My son ? He shall set up a ladder-stair
 Against this house, and in the triglyphs there
 Nail me this lion's head, that gloriously
 I bring ye, having slain him—I, even I !

*[She goes through the crowd towards the Castle,
 showing the head and looking for a place to
 hang it. Enter from the Mountain CAD-
 MUS, with attendants, bearing the body of
 PENTHEUS on a bier.]*

CADMUS.

On, with your awful burden. Follow me,
 Thralls, to his house, whose body grievously
 With many a weary search at last in dim
 Kithaeron's glens I found, torn limb from limb,
 And through the interweaving forest weed
 Scattered.—Men told me of my daughters' deed,
 When I was just returned within these walls,
 With grey Teiresias, from the Bacchanals.
 And back I hied me to the hills again
 To seek my murdered son. There saw I plain
 Actaeon's mother, ranging where he died,
 Autonoë ; and Ino by her side,
 Wandering ghastly in the pine-copses.

Agâvê was not there. The rumour is
 She cometh fleet-foot hither.—Ah ! 'Tis true ;
 A sight I scarce can bend mine eyes unto.

AGAVE

(turning from the Palace and seeing him).

My father, a great boast is thine this hour.
 Thou hast begotten daughters, high in power

And valiant above all mankind—yea, all
 Valiant, though none like me ! I have let fall
 The shuttle by the loom, and raised my hand
 For higher things, to slay from out thy land
 Wild beasts ! See, in mine arms I bear the prize,
 That nailed above these portals it may rise
 To show what things thy daughters did ! Do
 thou
 Take it, and call a feast. Proud art thou now
 And highly favoured in our valiancy !

CADMUS.

O depth of grief, how can I fathom thee
 Or look upon thee !—Poor, poor, bloodstained
 hand !

Poor sisters !—A fair sacrifice to stand
 Before God's altars, daughter ; yea, and call
 Me and my citizens to feast withal !

Nay, let me weep—for thine affliction most,
 Then for mine own. All, all of us are lost,
 Not wrongfully, yet is it hard, from one
 Who might have loved—our Bromios, our own !

AGAVE.

How crabbed and how scowling in the eyes
 Is man's old age !—Would that my son likewise
 Were happy of his hunting, in my way,
 When with his warrior bands he will essay
 The wild beast !—Nay, his valiance is to fight
 With God's will ! Father, thou shouldst set him
 right. . . .

Will no one bring him hither, that mine eyes
 May look on his, and show him this my prize !

CADMUS.

Alas, if ever ye can know again
 The truth of what ye did, what pain of pain
 That truth shall bring ! Or were it best to wait
 Darkened for evermore, and deem your state
 Not misery, though ye know no happiness ?

AGAVE.

What seest thou here to chide, or not to bless ?

CADMUS (after hesitation, resolving himself).
 Raise me thine eyes to yon blue dome of air !

AGAVE.

'Tis done. What dost thou bid me seek for there ?

CADMUS.

Is it the same, or chang'd in thy sight ?

AGAVE.

More shining than before, more heavenly bright !

CADMUS.

And that wild tremor, is it with thee still ?

AGAVE (troubled).

I know not what thou sayest ; but my will
 Clears, and some change cometh, I know not how.

CADMUS.

Canst hearken then, being changed, and answer, now ?

AGAVE.

I have forgotten something ; else I could.

CADMUS.

What husband led thee of old from mine abode ?

AGAVE.

Echion, whom men named the Child of Earth.

CADMUS.

And what child in Echion's house had birth ?

AGAVE.

Pentheus, of my love and his father's bred.

CADMUS.

Thou bearest in thine arms an head—what head ?

AGAVE

(beginning to tremble, and not looking at what she carries).

A lion's—so they all said in the chase.

CADMUS.

Turn to it now—'tis no long toil—and gaze.

AGAVE.

Ah ! But what is it ? What am I carrying here ?

CADMUS.

Look once upon it full, till all be clear !

AGAVE.

I see . . . most deadly pain ! Oh, woe is me !

CADMUS.

Wears it the likeness of a lion to thee ?

AGAVE.

No ; 'tis the head—O God !—of Pentheus, this !

CADMUS.

Blood-drenched ere thou wouldest know him ! Aye,
'tis his.

AGAVE.

✓ Who slew him ?—How came I to hold this thing ?

CADMUS.

O cruel Truth, is this thine home-coming ?

AGAVE.

Answer ! My heart is hanging on thy breath !

CADMUS.

✓ 'Twas thou.—Thou and thy sisters wrought his death.

AGAVE.

In what place was it ? His own house, or where ?

CADMUS.

Where the dogs tore Actaeon, even there.

AGAVE.

✓ Why went he to Kithaeron ? What sought he ?

CADMUS.

To mock the God and thine own ecstasy.

AGAVE.

✓ But how should we be on the hills this day ?

CADMUS.

Being mad ! A spirit drove all the land that way.

AGAVE.

'Tis Dionyse hath done it ! Now I see. ✓

CADMUS (*earnestly*).

Ye wronged Him ! Ye denied his deity !

AGAVE (*turning from him*).

Show me the body of the son I love !

CADMUS (*leading her to the bier*).

'Tis here, my child. Hard was the quest thereof.

AGAVE.

Laid in due state ?

[*As there is no answer, she lifts the veil of the bier, and sees.*

Oh, if I wrought a sin,

'Twas mine ! What portion had my child therein ?

CADMUS.

He made him like to you, adoring not
The God ; who therefore to one bane hath brought
You and this body, wrecking all our line,
And me. Aye, no man-child was ever mine ;
And now this first-fruit of the flesh of thee,
Sad woman, foully here and frightfully
Lies murdered ! Whom the house looked up unto,

[*Kneeling by the body.*

O Child, my daughter's child ! who heldest true
My castle walls ; and to the folk a name
Of fear thou wast ; and no man sought to shame
My grey beard, when they knew that thou wast
there,
Else had they swift reward !—And now I fare

Forth in dishonour, outcast, I, the great
 Cadmus, who sowed the seed-rows of this state
 Of Thebes, and reaped the harvest wonderful.
 O my beloved, though thy heart is dull
 In death, O still beloved, and alway
 Belovèd ! Never more, then, shalt thou lay
 Thine hand to this white beard, and speak to me
 Thy "Mother's Father"; ask "Who wrongeth thee?
 Who stints thine honour, or with malice stirs
 Thine heart? Speak, and I smite thine injurers!"
 But now—woe, woe, to me and thee also,
 Woe to thy mother and her sisters, woe
 Alway ! Oh, whoso walketh not in dread
 Of Gods, let him but look on this man dead !

LEADER.

Lo, I weep with thee. 'Twas but due reward
 God sent on Pentheus; but for thee . . . 'Tis hard.

AGAVE.

My father, thou canst see the change in me,



[A page or more has here been torn out of the MS. from which all our copies of "The Bacchae" are derived. It evidently contained a speech of Agâvê (followed presumably by some words of the Chorus), and an appearance of DIONYSUS upon a cloud. He must have pronounced judgment upon the Thebans in general, and especially upon the daughters of CADMUS, have justified his own action, and declared his determination to establish his godhead. Where the MS. begins again, we find him addressing CADMUS.]



DIONYSUS.



And tell of Time, what gifts for thee he bears,
 What griefs and wonders in the winding years.
 For thou must change and be a Serpent Thing
 Strange, and beside thee she whom thou didst bring
 Of old to be thy bride from Heaven afar,
 Harmonia, daughter of the Lord of War.
 Yea, and a chariot of kine—so spake
 The word of Zeus—thee and thy Queen shall take
 Through many lands, Lord of a wild array
 Of orient spears. And many towns shall they
 Destroy beneath thee, that vast horde, until
 They touch Apollo's dwelling, and fulfil
 Their doom, back driven on stormy ways and steep.
 Thee only and thy spouse shall Ares keep,
 And save alive to the Islands of the Blest.

Thus speaketh Dionysus, Son confessed
 Of no man but of Zeus !—Ah, had ye seen
 Truth in the hour ye would not, all had been
 Well with ye, and the Child of God your friend !

AGAVE.

Dionysus, we beseech thee ! We have sinned !

DIONYSUS.

Too late ! When there was time, ye knew me not !

AGAVE.

We have confessed. Yet is thine hand too hot.

DIONYSUS.

Ye mocked me, being God ; this is your wage.

AGAVE.

Should God be like a proud man in his rage ?

DIONYSUS.

'Tis as my sire, Zeus, willed it long ago.

AGAVE (*turning from him almost with disdain*).
Old Man, the word is spoken ; we must go.

DIONYSUS.

And seeing ye must, what is it that ye wait ?

CADMUS.

Child, we are come into a deadly strait,
All ; thou, poor sufferer, and thy sisters twain,
And my sad self. Far off to barbarous men,
A grey-haired wanderer, I must take my road.
And then the oracle, the doom of God,
That I must lead a raging horde far-flown
To prey on Hellas ; lead my spouse, mine own
Harmonia, Ares' child, discorporate
And haunting forms, dragon and dragon-mate,
Against the tombs and altar-stones of Greece,
Lance upon lance behind us ; and not cease
From toils, like other men, nor dream, nor past
The foam of Acheron find my peace at last.

AGAVE.

Father ! And I must wander far from thee !

CADMUS.

O Child, why wilt thou reach thine arms to me,
As yearns the milk-white swan, when old swans die ?

AGAVE.

Where shall I turn me else ? No home have I.

CADMUS.

I know not ; I can help thee not.

AGAVE.

Farewell, O home, O ancient tower !

Lo, I am outcast from my bower,

And leave ye for a worser lot.

CADMUS.

Go forth, go forth to misery,

The way Actaeon's father went !

AGAVE.

Father, for thee my tears are spent.

CADMUS.

Nay, Child, 'tis I must weep for thee ;

For thee and for thy sisters twain !

AGAVE.

On all this house, in bitter wise,

Our Lord and Master, Dionyse,

Hath poured the utter dregs of pain !

DIONYSUS.

In bitter wise, for bitter was the shame

Ye did me, when Thebes honoured not my name.

AGAVE.

Then lead me where my sisters be ;

Together let our tears be shed,

Our ways be wandered ; where no red

Kithaeron waits to gaze on me ;

Nor I gaze back ; no thyrsus stem,
 Nor song, nor memory in the air.
 Oh, other Bacchanals be there,
 Not I, not I, to dream of them !

[AGAVE with her group of attendants goes out on
 the side away from the Mountain. DIONYSUS
 rises upon the Cloud and disappears.

CHORUS.

There be many shapes of mystery.
 And many things God makes to be,
 Past hope or fear.

| And the end men looked for cometh not,
 And a path is there where no man thought.
 So hath it fallen here.

[*Exeunt.*



NOTES ON THE BACCHAE

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE *Bacchae*, being from one point of view a religious drama, a kind of "mystery play," is full of allusions both to the myth and to the religion of Dionysus.

1. The Myth, as implied by Euripides. Semelê, daughter of Cadmus, being loved by Zeus, asked her divine lover to appear to her once in his full glory; he came, a blaze of miraculous lightning, in the ecstasy of which Semelê died, giving premature birth to a son. Zeus, to save this child's life and make him truly God as well as Man, tore open his own flesh and therein fostered the child till in due time, by a miraculous and mysterious Second Birth, the child of Semelê came to full life as God.

2. The Religion of Dionysus is hard to formulate or even describe, both because of its composite origins and because of its condition of constant vitality, fluctuation, and development.

(a) The first datum, apparently, is the introduction from Thrace of the characteristic God of the wild northern mountains, a God of Intoxication, of Inspiration, a giver of superhuman or immortal life. His worship is superposed upon that of divers old Tree or Vegetation Gods, already worshipped in

Greece. He becomes specially the God of the Vine. Originally a god of the common folk, despised and unauthorised, he is eventually so strong as to be adopted into the Olympian hierarchy as the "youngest" of the Gods, son of Zeus. His "Olympian" name, so to speak, is Dionysus, but in his worship he is addressed by numbers of names, more or less mystic and secret—Bromios, Bacchios or Baccheus, Iacchos, Eleuthereus, Zagreus, Sabazios, &c. Some of these may be the names of old spirits whom he has displaced; some are his own Thracian names. Bromos and Sabaja, for instance, seem to have been Thracian names for two kinds of intoxicating drink. Bacchos means a "wand." Together with his many names, he has many shapes, especially appearing as a Bull and a Serpent.

(b) This religion, very primitive and barbarous, but possessing a strong hold over the emotions of the common people, was seized upon and transfigured by the great wave of religious reform, known under the name of Orphism, which swept over Greece and South Italy in the sixth century B.C., and influenced the teachings of such philosophers as Pythagoras, Aristeas, Empedocles, and the many writers on purification and the world after death. Orphism may very possibly represent an ancient Cretan religion in clash or fusion with one from Thrace. At any rate, it was grafted straight upon the Dionysus-worship, and, without rationalising, spiritualised and reformed it. Ascetic, mystical, ritualistic, and emotional, Orphism easily excited both enthusiasm and ridicule. It lent itself both to inspired saintliness and to imposture. In doctrine it laid especial stress upon sin, and the

sacerdotal purification of sin ; on the eternal reward due beyond the grave to the pure and the impure, the pure living in an eternal ecstasy—"perpetual intoxication," as Plato satirically calls it—the impure toiling through long ages to wash out their stains. It recast in various ways the myth of Dionysus, and especially the story of his Second Birth. All true worshippers become in a mystical sense one with the God ; they are born again and are "Bacchoi." Dionysus being the God within, the perfectly pure soul is possessed by the God wholly, and becomes nothing but the God.

Based on very primitive rites and feelings, on the religion of men who made their gods in the image of snakes and bulls and fawns, because they hardly felt any difference of kind between themselves and the animals, the worship of Dionysus kept always this feeling of kinship with wild things. The beautiful side of this feeling is vividly conspicuous in *The Bacchae*. And the horrible side is not in the least concealed.

A curious relic of primitive superstition and cruelty remained firmly imbedded in Orphism—a doctrine irrational and unintelligible, and for that very reason wrapped in the deepest and most sacred mystery : a belief in the sacrifice of Dionysus himself, and the purification of man by his blood.

It seems possible that the savage Thracians, in the fury of their worship on the mountains, when they were possessed by the God and became "wild beasts," actually tore with their teeth and hands any hares, goats, fawns, or the like that they came across. There survives a constant tradition of inspired Bacchanals in their miraculous strength tearing even bulls asunder

—a feat, happily, beyond the bounds of human possibility. The wild beast that tore was, of course, the savage God himself. And by one of those curious confusions of thought, which seem so inconceivable to us and so absolutely natural and obvious to primitive men, the beast torn was also the God ! The Orphic congregations of later times, in their most holy gatherings, solemnly partook of the blood of a bull, which was, by a mystery, the blood of Dionysus-Zagreus himself, the “Bull of God,” slain in sacrifice for the purification of man. And the Maenads of poetry and myth, among more beautiful proofs of their superhuman or infra-human character, have always to tear bulls in pieces and taste of the blood. It is noteworthy, and throws much light on the spirit of Orphism, that apart from this sacramental tasting of the blood, the Orphic worshipper held it an abomination to eat the flesh of animals at all. The same religious fervour and zeal for purity which made him reject the pollution of animal food, made him at the same time cling to a ceremonial which would utterly disgust the ordinary hardened flesh-eater. It fascinated him just because it was so incredibly primitive and uncanny ; because it was a mystery which transcended reason !

It will be observed that Euripides, though certainly familiar with Orphism—which he mentions in *The Hippolytus* and treated at length in *The Cretans* (see Appendix)—has in *The Bacchae* gone back behind Orphism to the more primitive stuff from which it was made. He has little reference to any specially Orphic doctrine ; not a word, for instance, about the immortality of the soul. And his idealisation or

spiritualisation of Dionysus-worship proceeds along the lines of his own thought, not on those already fixed by the Orphic teachers.

P. 8, l. 15, Asia all that by the salt sea lies, &c.], i.e. the coasts of Asia Minor inhabited by Greeks, Ionia, Aeolis, and Doris.

P. 8, l. 27, From Dian seed.]—Dian = belonging to Zeus. The name Dionysus seemed to be derived from *Διός*, the genitive of “Zeus.”

P. 9, l. 50, Should this Theban town essay with wrath and battle, &c.]—This suggestion of a possibility which is never realised or approached is perhaps a mark of the unrevised condition of the play. The same may be said of the repetitions in the Prologue.

Pp. 10–14, ll. 64–169.—This first song of the Chorus covers a great deal of Bacchic doctrine and myth. The first strophe, “Oh blessed he in all wise,” &c., describes the bliss of Bacchic purity; the anti-strophe gives the two births of Dionysus, from Semelê and from the body of Zeus, mentioning his mystic epiphanies as Bull and as Serpent. The next strophe is an appeal to Thebes, the birthplace or “nurse” of the God’s mother, Semelê; the anti-strophe, an appeal to the cavern in Crete, the birthplace of Zeus, the God’s father, and the original home of the mystic Timbrel. The Epode, or closing song, is full, not of doctrine, but of the pure poetry of the worship.

Pp. 14–23, ll. 170–369, Teiresias and Cadmus.]—Teiresias seems to be not a spokesman of the poet’s own views—far from it—but a type of the more cultured

sort of Dionysiac priest, not very enlightened, but ready to abate some of the extreme dogmas of his creed if he may keep the rest. Cadmus, quite a different character, takes a very human and earthly point of view : the God is probably a true God ; but even if he is false, there is no great harm done, and the worship will bring renown to Thebes and the royal family. It is noteworthy how full of pity Cadmus is —the sympathetic kindness of the sons of this world as contrasted with the pitilessness of gods and their devotees. See especially the last scenes of the play. Even his final outburst of despair at not dying like other men (p. 80), shows the same sympathetic humanity.

Pp. 17 ft., ll. 215–262.—Pentheus, though his case against the new worship is so good, and he might so easily have been made into a fine martyr, like Hippolytus, is left harsh and unpleasant, and very close in type to the ordinary “tyrant” of Greek tragedy (cf. p. 46). It is also noteworthy, I think, that he is, as it were, out of tone with the other characters. He belongs to a different atmosphere, like, to take a recent instance, Golaud in *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

P. 19, l. 263, Injurious King, &c.] — It is a mark of a certain yielding to stage convention in Euripides’ later style, that he allows the Chorus Leader to make remarks which are not “asides,” but are yet not heard or noticed by anybody.

P. 19, l. 264, Sower of the Giants’ sod.]—Cadmus, by divine guidance, slew a dragon and sowed the teeth of it like seed in the “Field of Ares.” From the teeth rose a harvest of Earth-born, or “Giant” warriors, of whom Echion was one.

P. 20, l. 287, Learn the truth of it, cleared from the false.]—This timid essay in rationalism reminds one of similar efforts in Pindar (e.g. *Ol.* i.). It is the product of a religious and unspeculative mind, not feeling difficulties itself, but troubled by other people's questions and objections. (See above on Teiresias.)

P. 20, l. 292, The world-encircling Fire.]—This fire, or ether, was the ordinary material of which phantoms or apparitions were made.

Pp. 21–23, ll. 330–369.—These three speeches are very clearly contrasted. Cadmus, thoroughly human, thinking of sympathy and expediency, and vividly remembering the fate of his other grandson, Actaeon; Pentheus, angry and “tyrannical”; Teiresias speaking like a Christian priest of the Middle Ages, almost like Tennyson's Becket.

P. 23, l. 370.—The goddess '*Oσία*, “Purity,” seems to be one of the many abstractions which were half personified by philosophy and by Orphism. It is possible that the word is really adjectival, “Immaculate One,” and originally an epithet of some more definite goddess, e.g. as Miss Harrison suggests, of Nemesis.

In this and other choruses it is very uncertain how the lines should be distributed between the whole chorus, the two semi-choruses, and the various individual choreutae.

Pp. 25–26, ll. 402–430.—For the meaning of these lines, see Introduction to *Euripides*, pp. lxi, lxii.

P. 28, l. 471, These emblems.]—There were generally associated with mysteries, or special forms of worship, certain relics or sacred implements, without which the rites could not be performed. Cf. Hdt.

vii. 153, where Telines of Gela stole the sacred implements or emblems of the nether gods, so that no worship could be performed, and the town was, as it were, excommunicated.

P. 31, ll. 493 ff., *The soldiers cut off the tress.*]—The stage directions here are difficult. It is conceivable that none of Pentheus' threats are carried out at all; that the God mysteriously paralyses the hand that is lifted to take his rod without Pentheus himself knowing it. But I think it more likely that the humiliation of Dionysus is made, as far as externals go, complete, and that it is not till later that he begins to show his superhuman powers.

P. 32, l. 508, *So let it be.*]—The name Pentheus suggests ‘mourner,’ from *penthos*, ‘mourning.’

P. 33, l. 519, *Acheloüs’ roaming daughter.*]—Acheloüs was the Father of all Rivers.

P. 35, l. 556, *In thine own Nysa.*]—An unknown divine mountain, formed apparently to account for the second part of the name Dionysus.

P. 35, l. 571, *Cross the Lydias, &c.*]—These are rivers of Thrace which Dionysus must cross in his passage from the East, the Lydias, the Axios, and some other, perhaps the Haliacmon, which is called “the father-stream of story.”

P. 36, l. 579, *A Voice, a Voice.*]—Bromios, the God of Many Voices—for, whatever the real derivation, the fifth-century Greeks certainly associated the name with *βρέμω*, ‘to roar’—manifests himself as a voice here and below (p. 64).

Pp. 37–40, ll. 602–641, *Ye Damsels of the Morning Hills, &c.*]—This scene in longer metre always strikes me as a little unlike the style of Euripides, and inferior.

It may mark one of the parts left unfinished by the poet, and written in by his son. But it may be that I have not understood it.

P. 46, ll. 781 ff., Call all who spur the charger, &c.]—The typical ‘Ercles vein’ of the tragic tyrant.

Pp. 48–52, ll. 810 ff.—This scene of the ‘hypnotising’—if one may use the word—of Pentheus probably depends much on the action, which, however, I have not ventured to prescribe. Pentheus seems to struggle against the process all through, to be amazed at himself for consenting, while constantly finding fresh reasons for doing so.

P. 49, l. 822, Am I a woman, then?]—The robe and coif were, in the original legend, marks of the Thracian dress worn by the Thracian followers of Dionysus, and notably by Orpheus. The tradition became fixed that Pentheus wore such a robe and coif; and to the Greeks of Euripides’ time such a dress seemed to be a woman’s. Hence this turn of the story (cf. above, p. 85).

P. 53, ll. 877–881.—The refrain of this chorus about the fawn is difficult to interpret. I have practically interpolated the third line (“To stand from fear set free, to breathe and wait”), in order (1) to show the connection of ideas; (2) to make clearer the meaning (as I understand it) of the two Orphic formulæ, “What is beautiful is beloved for ever,” and “A hand uplifted over the head of Hate.” If I am wrong, the refrain is probably a mere cry for revenge, in the tone of the refrain, “Hither for doom and deed,” on p. 60. It is one of the many passages where there is a sharp antagonism between the two spirits of the Chorus, first, as furious Bacchanals, and, secondly, as exponents of

the idealised Bacchic religion of Euripides, which is so strongly expressed in the rest of this wonderful lyric.

P. 55, l. 920, Is it a Wild Bull, this ?]—Pentheus, in his Bacchic possession, sees fitfully the mystic shapes of the God beneath the human disguise. This second-sight, the exaltation of spirit, and the feeling of supernatural strength come to Pentheus as they came to the two Old Men. But to them the change came peacefully and for good; to Pentheus it comes by force, stormily and for evil, because his will was against the God.

P. 59; l. 976, O hounds raging and blind.]—*i.e.* Spirits of Madness. This lyric prepares us for what follows, especially for Agâvë's delusion, which otherwise might have been hard to understand. I have tried to keep the peculiar metre of the original, the dochmiac, with a few simple licences. The scheme is based on $\text{J} \text{ J} \text{ J}$ or $\text{J} \text{ J} \text{ J}$, the latter being much commoner.

P. 61, ll. 997–1011.—The greater part of this chorus is generally abandoned as unintelligible and corrupt. The last ten lines (“Knowledge, we are not foes,” &c.) will, I think, make sense if we accept a very slight conjecture of my own, $\dot{\alpha}\acute{\epsilon}\nu\tau\omega\nu$, “let them blow,” instead of the impossible $\dot{\alpha}\acute{\epsilon}\iota\tau\hat{\omega}\nu$. The four lines before that (“A strait pitiless mind,” &c.) are an almost literal translation of the MS. reading, which, however, is incorrect in metre, and therefore cannot be exactly what Euripides wrote.

P. 62, l. 1036, And deem'st thou Thebes so beggared.]—The couplet is incomplete in the MS. But the sense needed is obvious.

P. 65, l. 1120, Let it not befall through sin of mine, &c.]—This note of unselfish feeling, of pity and humanity, becomes increasingly marked in all the victims of Dionysus towards the end of the play, and contrasts the more vividly with the God's pitilessness. Cadmus is always gentle, and always thinking of the sufferings of others ; and, indeed, so is Agâvê, after her return to reason, though with more resentment against the oppressor.

Pp. 67–71, ll. 1165–1200.—This marvellous scene defies comment. But I may be excused for remarking (1) that the psychological change of the chorus is, to my mind, proved by the words of the original, and does not in the least depend on my interpolated stage directions ; (2) the extraordinary exultation of Agâvê is part of her Bacchic possession. It is not to be supposed that, if she had really killed a lion, such joy would be the natural thing.

P. 69, after l. 1183, *The Leader tries to speak, &c.*]—It is also possible that by some error of a scribe two lines have been omitted in the MS. But I think the explanation given in the text more probable and more dramatic.

P. 70, l. 1195, And Pentheus, O Mother ?]—The Leader mentions Pentheus, I suppose, in order deliberately to test Agâvê's delusion, to see if she is indeed utterly unconscious of the truth.

P. 74, l. 1267, More shining than before, &c.]—The sight of the pure heaven brings back light to her mind—that is clear. But does she mean that the sky is brighter because of her madness which still remains, or that it is brighter now, after having been darkened in her madness ?

P. 77, l. 1313, And now I fare forth in dishonour.]—He has not yet been sentenced to exile, though he might well judge that after such pollution all his family would be banished. But probably this is another mark of the unrevised state of the play.

P. 79, l. 1330, For thou must change and be a Serpent Thing, &c.]—A prophecy like this is a very common occurrence in the last scenes of Euripides' tragedies. “The subject of the play is really a long chain of events. The poet fixes on some portion of it—the action of one day, generally speaking—and treats it as a piece of vivid concrete life, led up to by a merely narrative introduction (the Prologue), and melting away into a merely narrative close. The method is to our taste undramatic, but it is explicable enough. It falls in with the tendency of Greek art to finish, not with a climax, but with a lessening of strain” (*Greek Literature*, p. 267).

The prophecy was that Cadmus and Harmonia should be changed into serpents and should lead a host of barbarian invaders—identified with an Illyrian tribe, the Encheleis—against Hellas; they should prosper until they laid hands on the treasures of Delphi, and then be destroyed. Herodotus says that the Persians were influenced by this prophecy when they refrained from attacking Delphi (Hdt. ix. 42).

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

HISTORY OF ANCIENT GREEK LITERATURE.

ANDROMACHE: A PLAY.

CARLYON SAHIB: A PLAY.

THE EXPLOITATION OF INFERIOR RACES,
IN ANCIENT AND MODERN TIMES: AN
ESSAY IN 'LIBERALISM AND THE EMPIRE.'

EURIPIDIS FABULAE: BREVI ADNOTATIONE CRITICA
INSTRUCTAE, VOLS. I. and II.

EURIPIDES: HIPPOLYTUS; BACCHAE; ARISTOPHANES'
'FROGS.' Translated into English verse.

EURIPIDES: THE TROJAN WOMEN. Translated into
English verse.

EURIPIDES: ELECTRA. Translated into English verse.

EURIPIDES: MEDEA. Translated into English verse.

EURIPIDES: IPHIGENIA IN TAURIS. Translated into
English Verse.

THE RISE OF THE GREEK EPIC.





DATE DUE

MAR 07 1995

FEB 08 1996

NOV 06 2000

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



3 9358 00880317 0

PA
3975
A2x
1911
v.1

Euripides.
The plays of Euripides.
London : George Allen &
Sons, 1911.

37418

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



3 9358 00880317 0